

Harry Potter - Mercenary

A/N: This story is targeted for older readers and definitely earns the M Rating for violence, language and suggestive situations. It is not like my other works. Think 'The Sniper' with a harder edge. You've been warned.

This was an experiment in writing for me that I wanted to have a bit of fun with. It started as the outline for a full-novel length story. I decided not to expand it for now but I loved the story. It has not been beta-ed so all errors and typos are all mine.

I hope you enjoy it.

Harry Potter - Mercenary

Part 1 – The Prisoner

In solitude, where we are least alone. – Lord Byron

Azkaban – Sometime around 6 June 1998

The sun rises just to the left hand side of the small barred window overlooking the north Atlantic during this time of the year. For about nine months of year, it is not ever visible in that window. The window is six feet off the floor and is only sixteen inches wide. With almost a foot thick of stonewall, it was not easy to see the sun. I had to jump up, grab the edge and pull myself up. My cell never gets any real direct sunlight. I have to strain to push my face almost against the bars to glimpse the sun, to feel any warmth on my face.

According to the marks on my wall, I have been here for 529 days. I think that is fairly accurate, but the dementors used to gather outside my cell. Sometimes the cumulative power of their auras could overwhelm me and knock me out. I think I only lost a couple of hours each time but I can't really be sure.

Not that it bloody matters.

I realize I have been in prison for most of my life. I had 18 months of life with my parents before an insane wizard killed them because of a cracked witch's prophecy. For the next nine and a half years, I lived with the Dursleys. My room was a cupboard under the stairs. Then I got a ten-month reprieve to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Once the ten months were up, it was back to my prison. Now I've been here for about eighteen months.

What does this mean you ask?

I am almost eighteen years-old. All but six of those years I have been in prison of some type.

On second thought, maybe I should include those years I was at Hogwarts in my prison sentence. Does freedom really count when it is a mere delusion?

The jailors in this place have a cruel sense of humour. This same cell once held my godfather. They don't know he was innocent so they taunt me with the thought I am in the cell that once held my parents' 'betrayal'. I particularly enjoy the messages Snuffles left on the walls. Did you know he was very good at dirty limericks?

The limericks, and thoughts of my parents and Sirius, help me through my days here at the Azkaban Spa and Resort. It was thoughts of them that saved me when Voldemort possessed me, and it was again thoughts of them that saved me from the dementors.

Up until that point, I was a wreck. I think I was on the ragged edge of losing my sanity. It was during the three thousandth replay of my worst memories that I latched onto a memory of Sirius at Christmas singing his Hippogriff song. I didn't care anymore if I lived or not. I just wanted to be at peace.

A sense of peace and warmth washed over me. I could feel the dementors knocking at the door but I wasn't answering. I reveled in the feeling for a while. I'm not sure how long. But I could feel their frustration mounting.

I opened my eyes to see the hall outside my cell filled with the damned creatures. I think the whole compliment on this forsaken rock was there. With my sense of peace wrapped around me, I said two words; barely breathed them in fact.

Expecto Patronum

The real Marauders rode again. Prongs gored them on his rack, whilst Moony ripped them to shreds. Padfoot seemed content to grab a hold of their cloaks and pull'em off.

I learnt three things that day.

First, the effectiveness of a Partonus depends of the strength of your positive feelings. It is not the memory, but the emotion that powers them- that and a healthy dollop of magical energy.

Second, I can do real wandless magic, not just the accidental 'blowing-up Aunt Marge' variety. Riddle and Dumbledore can do it too. I guess some other wizards around the world can do it too but I've never seen any other British ones manage it.

But the most important thing was you never, never, never, NEVER want to see a dementor without its robes. I still have bloody nightmares about it.

Since then, the dementors give my cell a wide birth. I still cast the Partonus at least once a day. They don't stay for long but something of their positive energy lingers. It helps push back the darkness, both the prisons and my own. The air feels lighter now. I think my good mood tends to piss off the human guards that wander through every now and then.

You might wonder why I don't use my wandless magic to escape.

I can leave my cell, but a series of wards and magical suppressors keep me in the block. The wards are keyed to me personally. I suspect Dumbledore managed to turn the Blood wards inwards. When I try to walk towards the block door, it disappears. I think the suppressors prevent me from bringing it down.

Nice setup, you old bastard.

So, I generally stay in the cell with the door closed, if not locked. I was taking a walk once after discovering my wandless magic when the dementors tried to rush me. They were going for a Kiss like a bunch of crazed fan girls. I managed to get back into my cage and shut the door. Now I stay alert when I decide to stretch my legs but stay in with the door shut the rest of the time.

Aside from the dementors, I had another diversion to keep me busy, regular visits into poor Tommy Riddle's twisted little brain. I never lost consciousness of my cell or how hungry my body felt, but I get to spend hours seeing everything Riddle and his delusional band of Death Boffers got up to.

I really didn't need to know what Bellatrix liked to do with an audience and her wand. I really didn't. I wanted to Oblivate myself that night.

On the plus side, I got to sift through all of Riddle's memories of school and all of his sixty years of magical knowledge gained since then. He really is a brilliant wizard. He and Hermione would have been neck and neck for top of the year honours. After leaving school, he studied all over the place, mostly in the magical areas of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Haiti. The last is where the DADA curse came from. I know how to end it but I don't think I'll mention that to anyone.

The best thing about sucking all of Riddle's magical knowledge out of his twisted little mind is it comes complete with understanding. In an odd way, I am now a roughly seventy-something year-old Tom Riddle but with Harry Potter's body and conscience. I have more raw power than Riddle, but his rituals make him physically tougher than I am. He can take a shitload of damage and keep fighting. Since even after all I've been through I refuse to sacrifice a virgin woman at the moment of her seventeenth birthday, I won't be doing that one. Or the one he used to increase his reflexes.

Err, let's just say if you use the term, 'I can't believe he had the balls to do that...' it would not be appropriate to apply to Riddle. (Bet that one made you blokes cross your legs. I know I did the first time I

came across the memory.) I guess he reckoned that he didn't need to reproduce if he was immortal.

When you add all that to the trick he pulled with the Dark Mark, Riddle made himself really tough to beat.

I learnt Tommy is not an Animagus. He made an extensive study of the process with the firm belief that he would be a snake Animagus. He really wanted to be a cobra or an Emerald Boa. He did find his form, but it was something that His Snakiness felt offended by. I couldn't get the form from his mind he had it so heavily suppressed. I hope it was a mouse.

I have been able to work out my form also, a Peale's Falcon. It makes sense for me. I 'nudged' Tom one night to flip through a collection of animal forms. A Peregrine Falcon subspecies, these birds are known for the ability to dive from great heights, called stooping, to snatch its prey. In other words, the perfect form for a Seeker that pulled off a near perfect Wronski Feint the first time he was ever on a broom. Or knew what a Wronski Feint was.

Obviously, I can't fly here. Not even to get up to the damn window. (Not enough room for my wingspan.) But it is fun to just change form sometimes. Hey, I'll take my entertainment where I can.

You may be wondering what I did to earn these wonderful accommodations. Was I framed? Nope, I actually did what I was accused of. Betrayed by those I called my friends and family? The simple answer is No.

But what in the life of Harry James Potter has ever been simple?

As I said, I was guilty. I killed Draco Malfoy and his two goons. Slaughtered them like the pigs they were. Don't really feel bad about it anymore. They say prison changes a man.

Why did I kill the little bastard? It started on the train to Hogwarts at the start of my Sixth year. I overheard him bragging to his goons about his task of killing Dumbledore. I tried to warn Dumbledore, but he assured me that Snape had everything under control.

Being the brave, and foolhardy, Gryffindor I started to track Malfoy to catch him in the act. My friends told me to stop. "Trust Dumbledore," Hermione kept saying. "He told you Professor Snape will handle it." Ron backed her up. I think it was just because he wanted to get her back up. Ginny was off with Dean in a broom closet somewhere. Neville wanted to help but Hermione scared him off. Luna? I love the girl but Luna was never one meant to be inconspicuous.

The fight started because Malfoy and I were both so bloody stupid.

In the end, we fought because of the examples our elders set for us. Sure, he was a real arse, but he was fighting because that is how Lucius and Tommy trained him to act. Just like Dumbledore did for me. We both fought for the Cause. Opposite sides, but the same Cause.

I stumbled across Malfoy and his shadows sneaking into the Room of Requirement. He caught me with a detection ward. Spells started flying immediately. I'm not sure he ever knew who he was fighting. I shot a Bone-Crusher at Malfoy's knee, but Goyle fell in front of it. It took him in the neck. Malfoy and Crabbe started with the AK's at that point.

Looking back, I am impressed with their ability to power that spell repeatedly, but no one ever really taught them to fight. They stood in one place like a bloody duelling club.

I banished Crabbe down the hall and over the banister. I later heard Filch was standing at the bottom of the stairs when Crabbe landed two feet away. Wish I'd seen his face when Crabbe dropped in front of him. I saw the results later. Very messy. Filch apparently retired on the spot.

Malfoy died from rapid blood loss caused by the slicing hex I got out of my potions book Slughorn gave me. One spell sliced his stomach open and the other removed his left leg at mid-thigh. He tried to hold his guts in whilst he bleed out through his severed leg artery. Time seemed to freeze as I watched him die.

Dumbledore and Snape arrived moments after the blonde ponce went on to ‘the next great adventure’. Snape freaked out trying to get Malfoy’s body to the Hospital Wing. Dumbledore just gave me his disappointed look and asked me what happened. I told him everything that happened.

Next thing I know, I am on trial for three murders. The prosecutor called it an act of vengeance for the killing of my godfather. Narcissa gave a great show as the grieving mother. Might have even been true. A bunch of my fellow students testified how hostile and violent I could be. It was Second and Fourth years all over again.

Must be an even numbered year thing.

Remus was prevented from testifying as a known Dark Creature. Ron tried to help, but the defence of, “But it was Malfoy! Of course the slimy snake was doing something evil!” wasn’t going to impress a court made up with a bunch of Slytherin alumni. It was fun to watch through and I appreciated his honest effort.

Hermione was called to testify by the prosecution. She was reluctant but admitted on the stand that she tried to stop me from following Malfoy because I might do something rash. She made it worse when she started trying to justify it. The judge finally stopped her when she started babbling about how we saved Sirius and Buckbeak.

I don’t really blame her. The girl just can’t lie. Or control her mouth once it gets going.

In the end, it came down to the fact I had no hard evidence that Malfoy was doing something illegal and he didn’t have a Dark Mark. The prosecutor even got them to buy that Malfoy was simply defending himself with the AK’s since Goyle died before they started using them. The other dark spells they used before then went unmentioned.

I got three life sentences to sunny Azkaban. The Wizarding World that hailed me for standing up to Fudge’s Ministry condemned me again as a Dark Wizard. Stupid sheep. Didn’t they know a war was

going on? Yes, I killed three enemy soldiers. I hated Malfoy, but even I give him that much respect.

Tommy had a three-day party when the sentence came down. The Muggle attendees didn't survive much past the second day fortunately. I saw both Malfoy parents there enjoying themselves. The merriment looked a bit forced on Narcissa's part, but Lucius got over his grief soon enough. Riddle rewarded Lucius for the sacrifice of his only son with the contents of the Black and Potter vaults after he took possession of the Ministry. I thought Lucius would wet himself with joy. Oddly enough, the Crabbe and Goyle families got zilch.

I met with Dumbledore a final time before being carted off to my new vacation home.

"I am sorry this must happen, Harry, but I tried to warn you to leave Mr. Malfoy alone."

"So, you are planning on letting them ship me away?" I asked in shock. "What about the prophecy?"

"The prophecy will resolve itself," Dumbledore condescendingly assured me. "For now I believe it is for the best that you take the time to consider your actions, Harry. You brought this on yourself when you refused to listen to me. Now your actions call for consequences. As a minor, you will be placed in a low security wing with no dementors. I can only hope that you learn from this experience and return to the Light." Merlin he loves the sound of his own voice when he is being all 'grandfatherly'.

I admit I lost it at that point. Only the magical suppressors in the cell prevented a repeat of his office after Fifth year.

"What do you mean 'return to the Light'? I was trying to prevent that little bastard from killing you!" I screamed. The rant started from there. At one point, I asked if he was the old goat his brother got in trouble for buggering.

Actually, it was a damn good time. I could almost cast a Patronus from the memory.

Dumbledore just gave me his patented ‘I am so disappointed in you’ look and said, “I am afraid you have fallen further from the Light than I feared, Harry.” Then he turned and walked away. An hour later, I was Portkeyed to my new home and it wasn’t in the bloody ‘low security wing with no dementors’.

Sirius survived here for more than ten years on the knowledge he was innocent. I don’t have that luxury. I know what I did. I did what was right, not what was easy. I don’t have innocence to sustain me. I have justice.

Part II – Negotiator

There is nothing to winning, really. That is, if you happen to be blessed with a keen eye, an agile mind, and no scruples whatsoever.
– Alfred Hitchcock

One of the nice things about pulling memories from Tom, is I can sit and read books that he has already read. Sure, I already absorbed the knowledge, but it feels more real somehow to read it myself.

I am reading my favourite Warding text. It documents ancient Celt warding schemes. Not as famous as Egyptian or Norse, but just a devious. Plus a lot fewer Cursebreakers study them, even here in Britain. I use my finger to ‘write’ out the wards in the air. They don’t work that way, but it is the best I could do to get personal experience at it.

I was just about to complete the ward scheme to subtlety drain the magical core of intruders (very nasty) when I hear the guards opening the door at the end of the cellblock. Not missing a chance to needle them I start to sing whilst wiping away my writing.

“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen,

Nobody knows my sorrow.”

I’m a bass. Who knew?

I look up and pretend to act surprised at the sight of the two Auror guards. “A rescue mission? But you don’t look like Spaceballs.” I love that movie. Must have watched it fifty times the summer after Fifth year. It was the only thing I smiled about that whole summer. Sirius would have loved it too.

“On your feet, Potter,” generic guard one snarls. “You’ve a visitor.”

I think about being difficult, but it’s not as if I had anything else to do. So I stand up and allow them to put a pair of manacles on me and push me into the hall. Standing there is Albus “Twinkle of Doom” Dumbledore, backed up by two of his cronies, Moody and Shacklebolt.

“It is nice to hear you keeping your spirits up with music, Harry. Music is magic in a way we never practice.”

“Well, stick around a bit, Dumb-bully-door. The cocoanuts song starts in just a little bit. We get a musical show here every night in the low security wing.”

Dumbledore ignores the first part. He gets that damn long-suffering look on his face. “I am sorry about that Harry. An error occurred in the paperwork that was not discovered until this morning.”

A small smile comes to his lips. Damn, it’s going to be a dozy. “However, you have been released into my custody, Harry. You are being given a second chance. A chance you will get only once. I urge you to take it.”

I resist the urge to tell him what to do with his offer. “What chance?”

“You are in a position to do a great service for the Wizarding world, Harry. You know what I am referring to.”

“You mean the prophecy saying I am the only one that can off old Snake-face?” By the sudden inhalations of Moody, Shacklebolt and generic guards one and two, that information was still secret. Oh, joy.

From his expression, I had managed to annoy Dumbles. Point for me!

"Yes, Harry. I believe you have learnt here all that you can and it is time for you to return and fulfil your destiny."

"What's in it for me?"

The old goat honestly looks surprised. "You can show that you've paid your debt and returned to the Light."

Something the old goat said just hit me. "Wait a second! You knew what this place would do to my link with Tommy! You wanted me in his head! I wasn't near the dementors by accident! You arranged this whole bloody thing!"

Dumbledore dismisses it with a wave. "I am afraid this place has made you delusional, Harry. Your placement in this wing was an error just as I've told you."

He holds out a parchment. "Minister Scrimgeour is offering this magically binding contact. In return for defeating Voldemort you will receive a pardon for any crimes you have committed in the past."

I let him change the subject but I won't forget it. The Blood wards tell me Dumbles knew exactly where my cell was located.

"So, they finally got rid of that arse, Fudge?" I snarl. "Sorry, but my naïve, trusting days are long gone. After all, this is the second time you have left me on the shit end of the stick and never checked up on me. Obviously, I know not to believe you have my best interests at heart. Let me see this contract."

Dumbledore looks both offended and sad as he holds the parchment out in front of me. I don't have my glasses anymore but a bit of wandless magic in front of my eyes act like lenses. No one notices.

If I was mad before I read this 'deal', what I feel now is volcanic.

"Let me get this straight. I kill Voldemort and I get a pardon-"

"Yes, Harry" Dumbledore agrees.

I ignore his interruption and keep speaking. “But, I can be tried for any crimes I commit in order to do this, plus once I get my pardon I will be exiled and any remaining monies in the Black or Potter Gringotts vaults will be turned over to the Ministry? Are you barking nuts?!”

“You’re being offered a chance, Potter,” Moody growls. “You murdered those students in cold blood. If not for this prophecy, I say let you rot!”

“Should have left you in that trunk, you has-been.” I answer with a mocking smile.

“Harry, I must insist you do this,” Dumbledore states. “It’s for the best interests of all magical beings that you accept this offer.”

“On one condition.” I pause for a moment. “I want my wand. I know it wasn’t snapped. For the best interests of all magical beings, it was too valuable as the brother to Voldemort’s wand. Just like me.”

“I do have your wand, Harry. It will be returned to you at the appropriate time.”

“No. Put my wand in my pocket. No wand, no deal. And I keep it.” I see he is about to fight it. “My hands are bound. I only had five years at your damn school. What am I going to do? Explode my buttock off?” Shacklebolt actually grins a bit at that one.

“Sign the contract, Harry, and I will put it in your pocket right now.”

I scribble something like my name on the contract and feel the magic take hold. Dumbledore smiles approvingly and puts my wand in my back trouser pocket. Good enough.

Two more generic guards join us as I am escorted through the wards and out of the prison. I actually got my first real view of the island. What a barren rock.

“No Portkey?” I ask.

"The wards allow transit in, but not out," Shacklebolt explains. "We have to take a boat to the mainland and then Portkey from there."

I shrug and enjoy the first fresh air in almost two years. They lead me down to a small boat without an engine. Remembering Hagrid picking me up, I am sure it will be magically powered out of here. I quietly take my seat in the middle of the boat. The Aurors surround me. Do they really expect me to jump into the North Sea?

The trip to shore takes over an hour. Just before reaching land, I feel us clearing the wards. We pull up to a small dock. I stand and the guards lift me out of the boat.

"Why are you doing this now?" I ask abruptly. "You knew about this prophecy before I was born. Why have me freed now? You said the prophecy would resolve itself."

"That is not important now, Harry," Dumbledore assures me with his 'trust-me' smile.

"So, it had nothing to do with Riddle's raid that cost you Remus, Tonks, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, and Bill along with a dozen other Order members?" I ask casually.

The group comes to a stop so fast, I almost run into the guard in front of me.

"How do you know about that?" Shacklebolt growled. "I lost three team members in that raid!"

I shrug. "Tommy was watching from nearby. Plus I listened into his after action reports." I look directly at Dumbledore. "The three LeStranges caused most of the causalities, but Snape killed Remus and Tonks himself."

"You were in the connection to Tom," Dumbledore almost whispers.

"Yep, and I saw your 'trusted' Potions Master get a pat on the head for killing my last connection to my parents and his wife," I growl back.

Dumbledore turned and stunned the four guards that accompanied us out for Azkaban. A quick Obliviation removes any memory of things they should not know.

Turning back to me, he says, "I am sure Severus simply took advantage of the unfortunate circumstance to further build his cover. Now what can you tell me about Voldemort's plans?"

"Riddle didn't lose anyone in that raid," I point out ignoring his question. "So, why didn't the actual killer take credit for it then?" Kingsley looks ready to commit murder now himself.

"I will discuss this with Professor Snape," Dumbles says in his grandfather tone. "Now, about your connection to Tom." I know that discussion will never produce any results. I wonder what hold Snape has over the old bastard.

"I know just about everything. I assume you've already collected up all of Riddle's little trinkets?" Dumbles looks shocked at the reference to the Horcruxes. I decide to knock him a bit more off balance.

"By the way, do you want to know how to end the DADA curse?" Now Dumbledore cannot hide the look of hunger in his face.

"Whoops look at the time," I mutter. "Tea time!"

And with that, I Apparate away. Wish I could see their faces now.

Part III – Escapee

I have never let my schooling interfere with my education. – Mark Twain

1 August 1999 - Mosquito Island, British Virgin Islands

I stretch in the warm afternoon sun. The remains of my birthday hangover are starting to clear out. My nineteenth birthday was much better than any of the previous eighteen. I am sure even my first with my parents was never this much fun.

Last year, I was too busy to celebrate it.

After leaving Dumbledore with his thumb in his arse, I went straight to Gringotts. After offering the greedy little buggers a twenty percent ‘service fee’, I transferred all of the money out of the Black and Potter vaults except for thirty sickles left in each. The money goes into a new vault under the name ‘Zatarra’. The contract specifically said the Black and Potter family vaults, not my personal vault.

Maybe the Sorting Hat was right.

I also offered them a commission to sell almost all of the twelve Potter and Black properties in the British Isles, and place them on sale, preferably with the Muggle market. Turns out, I owned a big chunk of Diagon Alley. Insultingly, the Order was still using Grimmauld Place as a Headquarters. I exempted that one from the ‘Great Sell Off’. I was tempted to include it, but I didn’t want them to notice what I was doing and that would have been a dead giveaway. The other exception was the ancestral Potter Manor. I would never live there, but I think my parents would have wanted me to keep it in the family.

I also learnt the island Sirius hid out on after Third year was owned by the Blacks. It was located in the British Virgin Islands. No one had lived there for years and only an old shack remained on the island when I got here. It is located just north of the larger island of Virgin Gorda.

It sounded promising; I liked all the references to virgins. Hey, I told you prison changes a guy.

The goblins provided me with identity papers, including a driver’s license and passport, for Robert Zatarra. The passport even had three previous trips with authentic entry stamps. I also had a flight booked from London to San Juan Puerto Rico and a connecting flight to Tortola, BVI. I will say this; the goblins are expensive but do excellent work.

After landing in Tortola, I spent a couple weeks in a very nice resort recovering from my stay at Azkaban. At the time, I didn't know any local magical population, so I ate, worked out and rested to recover. Thanks to my magic, I was not in too bad a shape, but I had no endurance.

After a bit of recovery, I changed exercises to build up my endurance. I never found many virgins but I found plenty of local and tourist talent willing to help me build up my cardio fitness. One young lady from Raleigh, North Carolina said she found my 'mysterious menace' aura to be sexy. Her sister seemed to like it too. Her mum seemed torn between keeping her daughters away and keeping me to herself. Ah, good times.

Eventually, I bought a beautiful sailboat and started building a modest but very nice house on the island. It was all the talk for a while about the owner moving to the island, but it subsided quickly. Some subtle Notice-Me-Not wards did the trick. Muggles know where the island is and that I live there now, but they are not curious to know any details about me.

I eventually stumbled into the local magical community.

The Caribbean islands are not part of any formal magical government. Like most magicals I have met, they are a couple hundred years behind the Muggle world. Think of the old settlements like Nassau during the "Pirates Republic". The whole region is anarchic. Everyone is free to do what he or she want so long as it does not affect their magical neighbours or reveal our world. Blood isn't an issue here. The magic here is a mixture with European, African and native traditions all around here somewhere.

Finished stretching I look at the hot brown haired young lady laying next to me on the beach. Nice curves. What was her name? Tina? No! Tammy from Womelsdorf, Pennsylvania. Nice girl. Very sweet, happy disposition. Reminds me of an older Sue Bones but shags like a minx, What the hell kind of name is Womelsdorf for a town anyway?

I decide to wake my little friend up the proper way and start nibbling my way down her neck. I am making my way south to her toned

midriff, accompanied by her moans of enjoyment, when I feel the island's outer wards announce incoming visitors. It never fails. Just when things are starting to get interesting...

I hit Tammy with a stunner as I pull a coin out of my pocket and turn it into a Portkey. It takes Tammy to the safe room hidden under my house. Hey, I may be a lot of things, but I am considerate to my partner. I take my contraceptive potions and make sure she isn't hit in a magical fight. What more could a girl want?

I Apparate to my front porch and take a seat. With a hissed word, I activate my defences and prepare to welcome my guests.

Dobby arrives with a glass of lemonade. Somehow, the little bugger tracked me down. He won't admit it but I think he bound himself to me. He arrived with Hedwig the day after I did. He was deeply offended that the Wizarding world threw me in Azkaban for offing Malfoy. Between his love of me and hatred of all things Malfoy, the magical world should be glad he didn't start a house-elf revolution. Still, I enjoy his company and he has become a great cook of local dishes. He also makes a mean Rum Punch.

Sipping my lemonade, the wards identify my guests. It isn't too surprising. Dumbledore, Hermione, Moody, and Percy Weasley. Moody is under an invisibility cloak and trying to flank me.

Moody settles into the vegetation to my left and slightly behind me as I watch the other three walk down the path to my little patch of paradise.

"You can stop right there," I call and take a sip.

"Hello, Harry," Dumbledore says in greeting as he comes to a stop.

"You're trespassing, professor," I inform him in a polite tone.

He ignores me. "You were very difficult to find. It was only chance that a former student of mine on holiday spotted you."

Percy steps forward, “Mr. Potter, on behalf of the Ministry of Magic, I demand that you return with us at once to complete your terms of the magically binding contract you voluntarily signed!”

I smiled, “Hello Weatherby. How’s the family?”

Changing my expression to one of confusion, I ask, “What contract would I be in breach of? And wouldn’t I lose my magic if I did that?” I conjure a peach. Taking a bite, I said, “Nope, still got that old magic.”

“You are well aware of what contract I refer to! The one to kill Voldemort!” Percy yells at me.

“Oh, that one. Nope, not in breach of it.”

“Harry, you agreed to do that in return for the Ministry’s release of you from Azkaban.” Dumbledore says in his grandfather-y voice. “I don’t know how you avoided the results of the breach.”

A suspicion crosses my mind. A slow smile crosses my face. “Did you write the contract?” I ask Percy. I caught a quick glance at Hermione before he nods.

“Hmm, I thought I caught you in the wording, Weatherby, but I think some of the terms came from Ms. Granger here and the magic behind it.” I smile at Hermione. “I remember the contract you wrote for the DA.”

Hermione flushes at that but says, “Yes, I wrote part of it, but only because I knew you would never agree to help us of your own free will. My friend Harry would have in a second, but you’ve gone Dark.” She pauses for a moment and added, “And it is Mrs. Weasley now.”

I laughed delightedly, “After all of that, you married Ron?” Again the glance between Hermione and Percy. “Wait, you married Percy?!” I roar in laughter. “Oh, Merlin, that’s perfect! You two were made for each other!” I haven’t laughed this hard in years. It feels like my ribs might crack.

Seeing my distraction, Moody chooses that moment to send a Stunner my way. The former Auror's magical eyeball can see through all kinds of things; including the wall of invisible stainless steel.

The problem with the magical eye is it simply sees through the invisibility spell or cloak to see the object hiding underneath. The normal eye tells the wearer that something is missing what the magical eye can see. In this case, both eyes saw the same thing because there was nothing being hidden except the wall itself.

Now a burn mark hanging in seeming mid-air mars the wall. I force myself to settle down. "Come on down, Moody. You jumped your mark." Moody pulls the cloak off with a disgusted scowl.

I look back at the other three. "Well, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, your answer is time." They look confused. "You were so impressed with your own cleverness in getting me to do the Ministry's bidding and stealing my money for the Ministry that you forgot to put a time limit on when I was supposed to complete the contract. I fully intend to complete the contract ... eventually." I take another bite of my peach.

Hermione and Percy both look shocked. Their marriage makes sense in a sick way. Both of them are convinced that authority figures MUST be respected and rules followed. They also share a sublime confidence that they know best in every situation.

Hmm. Dumbles is the same way. Makes you wonder. The image of the three-way from Hell goes through my head. They burn! My eyes! They burn! Good God! That was almost worse the seeing the naked dementors!

Moody takes the opportunity to take another shot at me. Guess he figured he could overpower my 'magical' shield.

"Command: Units 15, 16, 17, track subject Moody, fire" I hiss in Parseltongue. Three tinny darts fire into the one-legged, orb-wearing former Auror. He slaps his neck with a shocked look on his face before slumping to the ground.

I use pneumatic dart guns guided by the wards and dipped in a curare derivative - a nice mixture of Muggle and magical. So many wizards only shield against spells unless they expect physical attacks. Even then, the shields only protect on a ninety-degree arch.

Dumbledore hurries to his friend's side whilst Hermione decides to yell at me. "Harry! How could you? You really have gone Dark using Parselmagic!"

It was just too funny. In my best 'Weekend Update' voice I start, "Hermione Jane, you ignorant slut, I simply activated my defences when your rude sleeping friend over there tried to cast a spell on me for the second time. I merely used Parseltongue to activate them."

From the insulted looks on their faces, none of them ever watched classic SNL. I highly recommend heavy doses of Saturday Night Live and Monty Python when recovering from Dementors.

Dumbledore was looking curiously at one of the darts in his hand. "He is awake but immobilized," he confirms. "What type of magic is this?"

"Pygmy," I answer. Yes, I know where curare comes from but why should I tell him the truth?

Dumbles looks confused by the answer. Before he could ask me any more questions, Percy decides to get into the act.

"Mr. Potter, if you do not return with us immediately to execute your destiny we will have no choice but to force your compliance."

"Really," I drawl over a grin. "And how would you force my compliance? Your little contract already takes any money in the Potter and Black Vaults and exiles me from Britain. I have no family left I care to admit to. Imperious doesn't work on me and physical violence would be most unwise. After all, you wouldn't want to accidentally kill your saviour." Percy already looks like he just sucked on a lemon. I didn't mention the vaults were almost empty.

I guess that made it Dumbledore's turn. "Harry, please think of the innocent victims of Tom's violence. Witches and wizards of all

backgrounds are being lost every day! The violence has spread to every country in Europe. Muggles are beginning to notice as their losses mount. The Ministry can only cover up some of them using accidents and natural disasters. Please Harry, for the Greater Good; I must insist you return with us." The old goat allows his magic to flow free trying to overwhelm me with his aura.

"Mate, after living with the dementors, your meagre little aura won't do shit." I comment in a bored tone. I can feel his frustration through the magic he is bleeding out. The great Albus Dumbledore hates to be dismissed as unimportant.

I sit forward and allow a bit of my own magic and anger to bleed out. "And why would I give a damn about the Greater Good? What the hell has the Greater Good ever done for me? I was a happy little soldier for you until you decided it was easier to let them send me to Azkaban then to take the heat and standing up for me! I didn't have evidence of Malfoy's treachery, but you did! You could have testified and cleared me, you old bastard. Not only did you let them put me near dementors knowing what they did to me, you actually helped them by setting those fucking blood wards for them to keep me there!"

I give Dumbles a cold smile. "My personal theory is you did it on purpose. You wanted to continue what you had Snape start my Fifth year by ripping down my mental barrier to Tommy by using the Dementors to finish the job. Plus, it put me out of the way for your little hunting expeditions. Well, you old bastard, you got everything you wanted. Deal with it!"

Feeling a bit better, I leant calmly back in my chair. "So don't talk to me about the Greater Good. Rather, let's talk about Harry's Goods."

"Harry's Goods?" Hermione asks in an angry voice. I remember that voice. It was the same one Ron and I would get when we ignored one of her 'suggestions'.

I give her a predatory grin. "Yes, as in, 'what will we be giving Harry for performing this unique service?'"

While Moody slumbers peacefully in the front garden, we get down to serious negotiations. In order to meet the requirements of the contract, I had to be moving ahead with my efforts to stop Riddle. I couldn't take the chance on how the magic would react if I just walked away from this little chat. Magic is about intent. It has always been my intent to stop Riddle once and for all.

"What do you want, Harry?" Dumbledore asks in a defeated tone. Not that I believed it.

"First, I want a magical oath on behalf of the Order and the Ministry, that no one from either will do anything to hinder my efforts to stop Riddle, or leave once Riddle is defeated." Dumbledore and Percy glance at each other before nodding their acceptance.

"Next, I want double the standard bounty for each Death Eater and Riddle. I believe that would be 5,000 Galleons per common Death Eater, 10,000 for each Inner Circle member, and 100,000 for Riddle." They look a bit shocked at this. Did they think I was still their little golden boy?

"Harry, how can you ask for money for this?" Hermione demands in an appalled voice. "Innocent lives are at stake!"

"Hey, you're taking my family vaults," I point out with a smirk. "My hero days are done. You people cured me of my 'people saving thing'. The return on investment for heroes is horrible. All that blood, sweat, and sacrifice and the sheep turn on you at the first difficulty. I did the hero thing and you threw me away. Gold is much more faithful."

Dumbledore looks disgusted by this. "The Ministry's confiscation of the Potter and Black fortunes was the cost of your freedom for a crime that you admit you committed!"

"A bloke has to make a living," I reply cheekily. "Not many employers want to hire convicted felons, after all."

Dumbledore looks a bit peeved. "Very well, but, except for Tom, you must bring them in alive."

I couldn't have that. "Sorry, not worth the risk. However, I will accept a bonus for the ones I bring in alive. Or you could always wait for the prophecy to resolve itself!"

Dumbledore and Percy look resigned. Dumbles nods his acceptance. Hermione looks furious.

"Finally, no witch, wizard or proxy for either the Ministry or the Order will approach within a hundred miles of this island without my invitation." A smirk crosses my face. "I would be a rude neighbour if I brought my problems down on the local magical community."

"We will agree to all of those terms, Harry" Dumbledore replies, "as long as you agree not to use any Unforgivables and return to England to deal with this immediately."

"I didn't plan to use them anyway, so I will agree to that. I will return within three days." I agreed. "Don't expect me to challenge Riddle to a duel though. This will not be a short or easy fight."

"Why not?" Hermione asked. "The prophecy says you can kill him." She is still pissed over the money thing I see.

"Wow, marrying Percy has really made you stupid." I comment. Then I leered at her. "Or did you get stupid via injection?" The mix of embarrassment and confusion on her face was amusing. Her face is so red it looks like a giant blister.

I turn back to Dumbledore. "The prophecy talks about the 'power he knows not'. But I have no idea what it is either." Actually, I think it was the whole knowledge download thing, but I am not in a sharing mood.

"It's love, Harry," Dumbledore asserts in a soft voice.

"I hope not, old goat, because if it is we're all doomed. 'Cause it's the power I know not too! And all thanks to your efforts! I mean between growing up with the Dursleys and dealing with your ungrateful magical sheep, I have no idea what love is. What should I do? Hug him to death?"

I pretend to think a bit. "Now, lust I have been working on a lot this last year. Do you think I can challenge Riddle to a contest to see who can pull the most birds on a Friday night in London?" I ask in a cheeky voice. "With that face of his, it won't be much of a contest."

I drop the act and say, "So, no, I highly doubt that love is the power he knows not."

"We will look into it, Harry. I am sure Mrs. Weasley here will be more than willing to assist in any research we may need," Dumbledore assures me. I can tell he is just placating me. Not that it matters, I am used to being on my own.

Dumbledore and I exchange our magical oaths. As head of the Order and the Wizengamot, his oath can bind them both. Percy's agreement on behalf of the Ministry confirms it.

"I will meet you at Grimmauld Place. Or would you rather me come to the Ministry?" I ask politely.

"We will be at the Order Headquarters," Dumbledore answers. "I will key you into the wards."

I wave that away. "Don't bother. I can get in anyway."

Dumbles hits me with a piercing stare. "How?"

"Did you think I didn't know who Sirius left that house to? Now, bugger off before I start charging you rent. I have a lovely young lady waiting for me. I'm sure she is getting lonely." That was not the real reason I can get in, but it was enough of a distraction. The not knowing will drive Moody and Dumbledore spare.

Percy casts a spell on Moody to float him along after them. They start down the trail when I call after them.

"By the way, the return of my cloak, broom, map and other personal items will go a long way to getting you any cooperation at all."

It's a bad sign when I see them flinch. Hermione takes the invisible cloak Moody had used and pulls it off his paralyzed body. She drops it to the ground without meeting my eyes.

"Accio cloak." Surprise, surprise. It was Dad's cloak.

Once I feel them leave the island, I go down to the safe room to recover the sleeping Tammy. I figure if I handle it right, I can get her back on the beach and pick up where I left off without her noticing a thing. I love magic.

Part IV – The Return

"In the end, everything is a gag." - Charlie Chaplin

3 August 1999

Circling high above my target in falcon form, I am waiting for the perfect timing. I am only going to get one shot at this.

I arrived in London the two mornings after my meeting with Dumbledore and his cronies by sailing up the Thames River. A normal Atlantic crossing by sailboat could take weeks. I cheated. The boat started as a custom-built 44-foot Gozzard ketch rigged sailing yacht with a full navigation suite. Getting the navigation package to work with magic around was a bit tricky. Aside from making the hull invulnerable to damage, I also added charms that made the hull slide through the water with no resistance. I added some impervious charms to the sails and strengthened the mast. Finally, I added 'on-demand' wind charms that give me a 10-25 knot wind in whatever direction I want. A small knob next to the compass lets me adjust what point the wind comes across the boat. I prefer a nice beam reach for my sailing.

Oops, sorry. Didn't mean to go all technical there.

The crossing was further hastened by turning the boat itself into a giant Portkey. A day outside the BVI and outside anyone's radar range, I jumped to a point four hours outside the mouth of the

Thames. From there it was easy to slip inside the country with no paperwork trail.

Anyway, I arrived up the Thames and tied up at a nice little marina about 10 km downstream from the centre of London. From there I took a room at 51 Buckingham Gate in Westminster. Who would look for a wizard in a Muggle 5-star hotel, especially one right in the heart of the Muggle government district? It seems like most magicals on the run try to hide out at the Three Broomsticks, Leaky Cauldron or one of the other Wizarding pubs. I guess they are too uncomfortable in the Muggle world.

Riddle's knowledge makes my aura untraceable. How else do you think he could waltz into the Ministry without setting off the wards or wander around the country without being tracked? No fancy wards or shields needed. It's a result of advanced Occlumency techniques.

On my trip back, I wondered how I should announce my return to the Wizarding world. Then the perfect idea came to me. The Marauders would be so proud of me.

I took the tube to a supply house outside London and made a rather large purchase. I had to use a couple of Confundus Charms on the staff. A quick charm shrank my purchase into a small tablet sized pellet. A couple of specialized charms later and I was ready to go. I paid the supplier as if they had made a delivery with the same address as the Ministry of Magic offices.

I knew where I was going but I had never been there. Riddle had though many times.

Slipping behind a convenient building, I set the tablet on the ground and stepped a bit away. Switching to my falcon form, I take to the air. I swing back to pick up the pellet in my talons. The pellet securely held; I climb to a height of three hundred feet and Apparated to Wiltshire.

The Ministry prohibits apparition in animal form. It takes power and concentration to do it in human form. In animal form, it is a whole order of magnitude harder. Fortunately, I have power to spare.

From my height, I can spot my target easily. I am gratified to see my old intelligence is correct. I can't access Riddle now. I can still feel pangs in my scar from his strong emotions, but deeper access is blocked. (I guess the dementors really did help me out.) However, I knew today was a tradition amongst Pureblood society.

My target comes out of the house. I line up over my target and start to dive. I feel the wards ahead of me at 150 feet off the ground. I release the pellet. I didn't really need to be too accurate anyway.

Simply put, wards prevent specific objects or beings from approaching the location. If the object or material is not included in the ward scheme, it may pass through. That is why layers of wards are used. For physical objects, warding is tricky. If the object has magical energy, the wards identify the intent of the user or caster. If harm is intended, the ward reacts to the magical intent even if the material is otherwise permitted. For non-magical objects, particular profiles are blocked, like the speed and trajectories of arrows or bullets.

Keeping that in mind, the first charm on the pellet 'felt' the nearing wards. It releases the shrinking and feather-light charms. Then it activates a small explosive charm in the centre of the mass. By the time the material reached the boundary of the wards, no magic remained on the material. Gravity is a natural force that would deliver it for me.

One hundred and fifty feet below where I am circling, Narcissa Malfoy is hosting the premier Pureblood social event of the season. Even with her husband on the run with Voldemort and her son killed by the murderer Harry Potter, the Malfoy Summer Social was still the event of the summer. Actually, it was one of the prime fundraising efforts of the Death Eaters. A form of Death Eater protection racket: 'Pay us now or we come to visit you later'.

Three metric tons of cow manure can spread to cover a very wide area. In addition, dropping 300 feet it can develop a good amount of speed too. The impact actually knocks most of the attendees to the ground. It's awesome! Malfoy Manor is covered in a layer of the stuff.

Thanks to my falcon eyesight, I can see everything, including Narcissa and Bellatrix being knocked out by gobs of falling shit. I can add this as another great Patronus memory!

On last delayed charm takes effect as I turn to fly away. The image of a giant white owl clutching a lightning bolt in each claw now hangs over Malfoy Manor. I swear I can hear the screams of anger from up here.

Hello England. Harry Potter is back!

--HPM--

4 August 1999

I step out of the taxi at 10 Grimmauld Place. The neighbourhood has definitely gone downhill. The Black townhouse would fit right in now even without the Fidelius Charm. I really don't want to be here. It still makes me feel bad about losing Sirius.

Ever wonder how Sirius got into Grimmauld Place to claim it? After all, he was kicked out by his family and burnt off the family tapestry. The house wards would not have recognized him as a Black any more than Tonks' mum.

The answer was a gap made by a young Marauder sneaking out to visit his best mate, James Potter. It was the equivalent of a hole under the back fence. I found my dad's journal mixed in with the junk the goblins pulled out of the Potter properties before selling them on the Muggle market. I found a bunch of my parents' things from Godrick's Hollow dumped into boxes: wedding photos, books, jewellery, and other mementos. Would have been nice to have those years ago.

I slip through the slight gap in the wards. Normally the Fidelius would have covered up the gap but I do know the secret so it is rendered powerless.

Casually, I stroll up to the back door of the house and let myself into the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix. I am not surprised at all

to find Dumbledore and more than a dozen Order members waiting for me. I see all the surviving Weasleys, including Hermione and Fleur, along with Moody, Shacklebolt, and Neville of all people. I didn't recognize the last two.

"Greetings all," I say with my best Lockhart smile. I think I broke them because the room went silent.

"How did you get in here, Potter?" Moody growls.

"Hey Mad-Eye, I see you've recovered your sunny disposition nicely," I answer with a cheeky wave. I notice Ron and the twins are sporting large grins at this.

I start to walk over to Ron. He meets me half way and grabs me in a manly hug. "Harry, mate, it is good to see you again. Hogwarts was so boring without you!"

I look up because he towers ten centimetres over my head. "Blood hell, Ron. I knew we shouldn't have let you eat so much." Ron looks like a tank now. Not fat like Dudley, just built.

"Heh, we should have force fed you, runt." Same old Ron. Completely clueless, but well meaning.

I looked at him seriously. "I was sorry to hear about Bill and your parents. They were really good people."

I see Ron's eyes tear at bit and hear a sob come from about where Fleur is standing. "Thanks mate, I know they would be glad to hear you got out of that damned place. We tried to visit but the Ministry refused to let us in." I nodded my understanding. I already knew that because I saw Riddle tell his Ministry puppets to keep me isolated.

"Harry,"

"It is great to get our partner back-"

"We really must hear how you-"

"Knocked out Moody."

I turn to the twins. "Hello to you too, Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dum. How's tricks?"

"Maybe we should ask you-

"Been to the Malfoy Manor recently?"

I smile innocently. "I have no idea what you are talking about."

"Sure you don't Harry," a soft voice says. I feel a pair of arms sliding around me. I turn to find Ginny wrapping me in a hug. I notice a couple of things. First, Ginny is only a bit shorter than I am. Second, she managed to get her mum's chest without the waistline to match.

"Damn, Ginny, do you borrow your brothers' Beater bats when you go out?" I ask with a suggestive wink.

Ginny blushes a bit but rallies, "No, I just take my boyfriend instead."

I glance over to see Neville blush a bit himself, but grinning at me. "You two got together? Brilliant! I was wondering..."

"Harry," Dumbles interrupts, "as nice as this reunion is we must talk about what you have done yesterday."

"You mean he let the Death Eaters know they are in deep shit now?" Ron asked with a smirk. Snickers come from the 'good' Weasley corner.

"Ronald, grow up. Potter's antics have offended most of the Ministry's major supporters," Percy sniffs. "Minister Scrimgeour has been working overtime smoothing things over."

"Ministry supporters? Then what were they doing hanging out with Bellatrix and the other Lestranges?"

"You saw Bellatrix there?" Shacklebolt asks doubtfully. "The Ministry Aurors watching the party didn't report her there."

I shrug. "Then I suggest you check their arms. She was standing next to her sister when they both got knocked on their arses by a ton of shit." I pause while Fred, George and Ron are the only ones not looking at me in disbelief. I smile, "Okay, I misspoke. It was actually three tons of shit. Rather moist too."

"Messrs. Prongs, Padfoot and Moony would be so proud of you," George gushes whilst Fred pretends to wipe a tear from his eye.

"They call me Mr. Talon," I tell them with a wink and my best Sidney Poitier impression. The Weasleys start to snicker. I doubt they get the movie reference but they get the name.

"Enough!" Dumbledore thunders. I guess the old goat has reached his limit. Let's see if I can push them any further.

"We have serious issues to discuss," he continues. "The Order will be having a general meeting in one hour and we have details to agree on." The room settles down.

"Now, Harry, you will stay here until we are able to locate Tom's current base of operations. I have arranged with the Ministry to provide you with the duelling training you will need to face him."

"You think I am going to let you lock me up here like you did Sirius?" I ask incredulously.

"You only have a Fifth year's education," Hermione sniffs condescendingly. "And only an average student's knowledge at best. Without proper advanced preparation, the probability of defeating Voldemort is infinitely low." After a pause, she pointedly added, "Unless you wish to hope on pure dumb luck."

"Pure dumb luck worked when Ron and I saved you from the troll," I shoot back at her. It looks like Hermione's blood pressure could be a problem. She's starting to look like Vernon around tax season.

"Let's just make this simple," I suggest. "You hired me to do a job. Fine. I will send Hedwig every day or so for any information you turn

up on the Death Eaters or Riddle. I drop by my catch and you can have a 'Pay to bearer' Gringotts draft ready for me on my next visit. Does that work for everyone?"

"That is not acceptable, Harry," Dumbledore insists. "You are not ready to face Tom. I am afraid that I will have to force you to remain here. Now, Mrs. Weasley here has agreed to work with you on magical theory and ..."

That was as much as I heard. I couldn't Apparate or Portkey in because of the house's wards. However, once I was inside, they recognized me as the true owner of the house. Anything Dumbledore had put on in addition was still built on the foundation of the initial Black wards.

I jump to Hyde Park. It is an easy flight from there to my hotel room. St. James Park would have been closer, but it would have been a little too ironic for them to think it was a random choice. A rain repealing shield and a mild Notice-Me-Not on the open window is enough to make sure room service has not closed me out.

Thanks to Dumbledore, the meeting was shorter than I expected. I figure I have time to get a nice late lunch before I need to leave. Then it will be time to start hunting.

Part V- Hunting Season

"Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake." - Napoleon Bonaparte

9 August 1999

I am getting ready to take down one of my first major targets. He may not make it to the Ministry before I am ready to kill Riddle. I have a much better place to store him for now. I just need to wait for him to sit down to dinner. The restaurant is a small, upscale magical one that overlooks Portsmouth harbour. Very discrete and not the kind of place an Auror would go for a meal. It caters to the wealthy and connected. In other words, the perfect place for Purebloods.

I found my first Death Eater completely by accident. He led me here.

The Dark Marks resonate with a certain magical energy that links them together. The linkage is how Tommy summons his slaves. The Mark is a corruption of an Egyptian slave brand cast in Parseltongue. The late Bill Weasley or any competent Cursebreaker would have been able to remove the Marks if they spoke Parseltongue. Because of the magical linkage, it is possible to detect them using a magical detector set on the same magical “frequency”. Think of it like a tuning fork. When I send out a signal, the Mark “pings” back a signal. It only gives direction and an idea of distance.

It was late at night and I was passing over Diagon Alley in my invisibility cloak on a new Firebolt II that I purchased via the goblins earlier in the day. I planned to try the detector in Knockturn Alley. But I noticed some activity near Flourish & Blotts, so I activated the detector. I wasn't too surprised to get a ping back.

What shocked me was when I learnt the identity of the Death Eater.

Landing on the roof, I glanced down over the edge. I noticed four men unloading what looked like boxes of books from a floating cart. A slight, scholarly-looking man was watching with a parchment and quill as the men levitated the boxes into the shop. I ‘pinged’ again and decided the Death Eater was the one with the parchment.

I waited until no one was in sight and hit him with wandless Silencing and Summoning spells. The shocked wizard was pulled up the side of the building. I greeted him with a punch to the face. While he was surprised, I cast a Binding charm and took his wand.

After casting a privacy charm, I removed the Silencing spell. “What is your name?”

“Who are you?” the panicked wizard asked. “You can't do this!”

With a gesture of my wand, I banish his sleeve revealing his Mark. “I will ask once more. Who are you?

“Gi-Gideon Blott! My father owns half of Flourish & Blotts!”

"How long have you been a Death Eater?"

"I'm no- Ahhhh! Since he returned! Ma-Malfoy recruited me! That's all I'm saying! Arrest me, take me in!"

"Why you?" I put my wand tip against the back of his left knee. "I am going to ask once more. Why did Malfoy recruit you?"

"I won't AAAHHHHH!" A word caused the dark wizard's knee to erupt outward spraying bone and cartilage all over the roof.

Casually, I tell him, "You still have one knee left. Last time I checked, St Mungos still couldn't heal this kind of damage or regrow the knee from this particular dark curse. It's the same thing that happened to Mad-Eye Moody's leg." I wait a second and ask again, "Why you?"

Blotts groaned in agony. "I gave him the names of everyone that bought the Mudblood packages!"

"What packages?"

Another groan. "It explains magic and our world to the damn mudbloods! They come into our store every summer after getting their letters and ask all their stupid questions! Father had it written to answer their questions!"

"Hmm, I never got one. Could have been useful," I muttered.

Returning my attention to Blott, "So, you gave the Death Eaters the information they needed to target defenceless students and their families? You said Malfoy recruited you. How do you contact him?" Blott shook his head no. I put my wand behind the other knee. "One, two, thr-"

"Okay, okay! He goes to a restaurant, "The Merlin's Majesty" in Portsmouth! Every Monday night! He'll be there! In Portsmouth!" I could feel his truthfulness through the small amount of Legilamency I can do. Unfortunately, I still have little talent for most Mind Magic.

I asked a couple questions to make sure he was the only Death Eater in the bookstore. Turns out his father is a ‘Mudblood Lover’. I get the names of a couple of his masked friends. A small Muggle needle filled with pure curare is enough to quickly and painlessly stop the Death Eater’s heart. I got what I needed and there was no further need for him to suffer. I dropped a silver sickle on his chest and his body disappeared as the Portkey activated.

--HPM--

Now I am crouched in the alley behind “The Merlin’s Majesty” under my cloak waiting for Lucius Malfoy to finish his meal. Three more deceased Death Eaters had arrived at the Order Headquarters since Blott. The Death Eaters form cells of four or five members. Only one knows a contact outside their cell, theoretically. Blott’s contact was Malfoy, but he did know one other Death Eater from another cell. Malfoy will have a lot more names for me.

The back door opens and an elegantly dressed Lucius Malfoy steps into the rubbish-strewn alley. He is strutting along twirling his silver handled cane. I expected that. What I didn’t expect was the young skinny, black-haired teenage boy that followed along behind him.

It freaks me out a bit; this boy could pass for me in my Third year in poor light.

The boy’s eyes had a slightly glazed over look while gazing adoringly at the wizard he was following. The expression indicated the boy either was in love or had been dosed with some heavy-duty potions. I am betting on the potions. That’s going to make this tricky.

Stopping in the middle of the alley, Malfoy turns to the boy following him. “Here boy, take a hold of my cane. I will Apparate us to my home,” he says in his usual cultured, arrogant tones.

“Yes, sir,” the boy says in a vapid voice. “Then may I please you?”

“You may try,” Malfoy sneers back.

Malfoy has protective shields up around himself so a quick hit would be unlikely to drop him in a single spell. I don't want the boy hurt, so my first spell is a Stunner that hits him in the shoulder. He drops silently to the ground.

Malfoy turns around and draws his wand in one smooth motion. "Who dares interfere with me?!"

"That would be me," I answer as I step out of the shadows. "The boy has no part in this, you sick bastard."

"Potter," he growls. "I knew it was you that ruined my manor! You killed my only son. Since I couldn't take my revenge on you I do it to them." He gestures at the unconscious boy. The implications are clear and very sick.

"Some of them learnt to like it," he sneers. "Maybe you will too in time." A slashing motion from his wand sends a purple light flashing past me.

My concussion hex hits the ground just shy of his shields sending debris in the forms of small asphalt shards into his legs. He hisses in pain when I take a page out of another Dark Lord's playbook. The metal trashcans, lids and other junk flies up and pelt Malfoy. One lid manages to splatter his nose over his face.

"Abvra Kabavrah!" Malfoy yells whilst pointing his wand at me. Nothing happened. Neville would have loved that after what happened at the Ministry battle.

"Get him now!" I yell out. Predictably, Malfoy whirls to see who is behind him. I move up and punch him in the kidneys. I take his wand while he is dealing with the pain.

"That was pathetic, Lucius. Muggle schoolchildren know that trick. You really need to watch more movies."

I cast a Body-Binding Charm on the blonde Death Eater. While he is still gasping for air from the punch, I pull out a Muggle eyedropper from my pocket. Three drops in his mouth later and I am ready to go.

Two hours later, I drop the boy off at St. Mungos. He was a Muggle boy under an Imperious. The Healers would fix him up and Oblivate him from all memory of magic and what happened to him for the last six weeks. Unfortunately, it is too late for his predecessors.

I have new plans for Malfoy.

--HPM--

10 August 1999

It took me all night and cost me 5,000 Galleons, but the results were worth it.

I walk into the Orders Headquarters just after eight in the morning. It was the first time I'd been here since my abortive meeting with Dumbledore. I find a familiar sight waiting for me: Hermione and Ron fighting over the large kitchen table.

"Well, this brings back memories," I say as I step in the door.

"Harry!" Ron calls in greeting. "You came back!"

"Obviously," I comment dryly.

Ron grins and starts to come back when Hermione erupts. "Harry, you can't just go around killing people! They have rights and need to have a trial. If they are guilty, they will be sent to Azkaban! You can't act as judge, jury and executioner!"

"I can't?"

"No! You most certainly cannot! If it wasn't for that stupid contract you forced the Ministry to agree to you would be under arrest right now!"

"Ahh, you mean you can't. After all, according to Dumbledore, I am Dark, right? By the way, did you recognize my first target?" Hermione nods with her lips pressed together in anger. "Did you know what he did for Riddle?" I proceed to tell her all the details as she starts to turn

green. "How many innocents died from the information he passes on? How was it not justified?"

An unwelcome, familiar voice interrupts from further in the house. "Ah, Potter. Still thinking you are above the rules."

I viciously suppress the urge to render the bastard down to component atoms on the spot. "Hello, Snivellous," I say in a polite tone with a smile. "I see you are back from getting your oil change." Snape glares at me.

"Gentlemen, please," Dumbledore says as he enters the room. "Harry, I am most disappointed that you are killing all of the Death Eaters that you catch. It is quite obvious that they died after questioning by you."

I shrug unconcerned. "I have my reasons and I haven't killed all of the ones I've caught. Malfoy is still alive." That causes the room to erupt.

"You caught Lucius?" Snape asks in a demanding, disbelieving tone. "Where is he? What have you done with him?" I just smirk.

"Harry, please answer Professor Snape's questions," Dumbledore says in his Headmaster tone.

"He's alive right now," I allow with a smirk, "but he probably wishes he wasn't."

"Where is he?" Hermione demands. "You are a private citizen. It is illegal to hold people prisoner. You must hand him over to the Ministry."

I look at my former best female friend in mock astonishment. "Wow, you really have become an anal retentive rules monger." I pause a moment, "Hmm, actually you always were." I grin mockingly at her. "Let me guess, you've turned to the real Dark side. You're a Ministry solicitor now, aren't you?" Ron starts to laugh, as Hermione turns purple.

"Malfoy is currently enjoying his own bit of justice. And no, he is not in my custody."

"Tell us where he is, you insignificant brat!"

"Go to hell, Snape." I reply. "Hoping you can 'rescue' him and return him to your master?" I turn a sneer on Dumbles. "All for the Greater Good to build up your cover, of course!"

"Please Harry. It is Professor Snape. Severus has proven faithful to our cause far more than you have and deserves your respect."

"Really?" I ask with a grin. I toss a packet of papers onto the table. "That is a copy of the conversation I had last night with Malfoy. I got him to name every Death Eater he knew the names of and every Ministry official that has taken money to look the other way, including your boy over there."

Snape goes paler than normal as Dumbledore snaps the packet off the table. "How did you get this?"

"Veritaserum and a legal-grade dictation quill. We went on for hours."

Hermione pales as she starts reading some of the pages Dumbledore had already turned over. "You said this is a copy? Where is the original? Are there more copies?"

I smile. "In a safe place and yes." Three sets of worried eyes look up at me. From the tears on his face, Ron looks ready to break down in laughter. "I sent a copy to the DMLE, the Prophet, the Quibbler, Teen Witch Weekly, PlayWizard, and just about any other magical media outlet I could think of." Their jaws dropped lower with every publication I named.

"Harry," Dumbles says in an appalled voice. "This will destroy the Ministry! There must be a dozen Ministry officials named as Death Eaters here!"

"Six Aurors, three Unspeakables, two department heads, nine bureaucrats and a janitor to be exact," I correct him. "I bet the janitor was the most effective of the lot." Ron snorts as Dumbledore and company look sick.

“Forty more were named as taking bribes. Malfoy kept very good records and told me how to get a hold of them. Even a hack prosecutor could get a conviction with ‘em.” I pause at their shocked expressions. Hermione glares at me for the prosecutor shot. “Oddly enough, the only Hogwarts House not represented there are the Puffs.”

“Why Harry? Why would you do this?” Dumbles asks in a desperate tone.

“You wanted me to end this as soon as possible, old man. I’m doing just that.”

“You think this will draw out the Dark Lord?” Snape sneers.

“Nope, just get a chunk of his Death Eaters out of the way and remove the influence of the rest.”

“And then what Harry?” Dumbles asks softly.

“I’ll keep that to myself right now. You may trust Snivelous but I don’t and I don’t know who else you would tell.

“Harry, I must insist...”

“Insist all you want. Now, I want my drafts for the three Death Eaters I’ve delivered so far.” I pause for a second and add, “I should have added a fee for the use of my information for you to capture the Death Eaters, but I guess it’s too late now.”

Hermione slides three drafts across the table with a disapproving glare. I wonder if Hermione would have been a mini-Percy all through school without Ron and me influencing her.

“Thank you very much.” I put the drafts in a pocket without looking at them. I back towards the door.

Ron walks towards me with his hand out. “Harry, it was great to see you again. If you need any help, let me know.”

I take his handshake. "I'll keep that in mind." With that, I slip out the door. I Apparate to St. Mungos and check for Tracking charms. (Found three) I glance down at the paper Ron slipped me. It simply said, "The Burrow 10:00 tomorrow night". Interesting. I change form for my flight home.

Part VI- Interlewd

"Give me chastity and continence, but not yet." - Saint Augustine

10 August 1999

After leaving Order Headquarters, I made my way back to my hotel room and crashed for the rest of the day. I woke up around dinnertime and wandered out for some dinner. A nice Muggle suit made me indistinguishable from the dozens of government drones wandering about the area. My tan from a year in the BVI makes me stand out a bit from most of the pasty-skinned bureaucratic herd, but not too bad.

Hedwig was waiting for me with a late edition of the Daily Prophet when I returned to my room. She gave me an affectionate nip after dropping the paper and flies over to her perch.

The paper falls opened to scream:

Wanted Death Eater Confesses All!

Escaped Azkaban inmate and convicted Death Eater Lucious Malfoy sent all major Wizarding publications a full, signed confession admitting to his activities as a Death Eater and the names of all of his associates. The Daily Prophet contacted three different solicitor firms to verify the authenticity of the document. Each of them confirmed the signature and magical seal were indeed from Lucious Malfoy. The Daily Prophet has included the entire text of this remarkable document starting on the second page of this paper.

Minister of Magic claims Malfoy letter 'unconfirmed'

Minister of Magic Rufus Scrimgeour was contacted early this afternoon about the Malfoy letter. The Minister refused to speculate as to the validity of the letter and said it may be a hoax. "This letter names several of my closest and most trusted friends and associates! I find it impossible to believe that any of them would have assisted He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named in any way!"

I snickered at the various quotes and statements made in the paper. The fact Malfoy signed it whilst under Veritaserum makes the letter magically confirmed. The Malfoy records and notes that accompanied the letter makes it that much stronger. Scrimgeour can protest all he likes but the DMLE is going to be on this for all their worth.

I decided to take the evening off and hit a Muggle pub for a pint or two. The Death Eaters are probably too stirred up after today's news anyway.

--HPM--

Now I am sitting in a Muggle pub just around the corner from my hotel cursing my luck. All I wanted to do was have a pint and meet Miss Right-for-the-evening. Have some fun, a few laughs and then back to my room to shag like a pair of rabbits. Was that too much to bloody ask?

As I mentioned, the Caribbean doesn't have a formal government. It also doesn't have any purely magical areas. The local native population generally accepts our oddities and lets us live almost openly. As long as we aren't too obvious in the use of our powers, it's all good.

An old Haitian witch named Ila taught me to find other magicals. It is not a spell but a way of 'feeling' the resonance of your magic and another's. The skill tells you another magical is nearby, but nothing about direction. It is useless in a place like Diagon Alley or Hogwarts. Even at the Weasleys it would be worthless because of all the magicals. It's really only good for finding magicals in non-magical areas.

Hogwarts never teaches this skill because they can't conceive a witch or wizard living outside their magical community. Stupid purebloods.

I wandered into the pub and ordered my first drink before I realized I felt the resonance of another magical in the place. Sue me for not being vigilant enough. A quick glance around and I spotted her, Daphne Greengrass. Why would the Pureblood Princess of Slytherin be slumming in a Muggle pub of all places? Malfoy never mentioned her in his list of Death Eaters or their stooges. I realize that in my time as Riddle's 'guest', the Greengrass name never came up either.

Surprising that actually.

Greengrass never participated in Draco Malfoy's little band of hooligans but she made it clear that the rest of us were pond scum to her. By the time of my disagreement with Malfoy in Sixth year, Ms. Greengrass was destroying hearts left, right and centre. Never even seemed to notice, a serious cold fish.

I want to resist but my biggest weakness was never the whole 'saving people thing'. It is curiosity. Usually my curiosity got me into a position where I had to save someone.

I pick up my drink and wander over to her area of the pub. I cast a minor glamour on my scar. The tan hides it fairly well unless you know to look for it and she might. The crowd around her is fairly thick with guys. She is laughing and flirting with three guys simultaneously. I get a couple of angry glares as I move in closer from other blokes.

Five feet from Greengrass, I feel a mild compulsion spell take effect against my Occlumency shields. I recognize it as a spell to make people trust the caster implicitly and want to talk to them. Dumbledore uses it on the First and Second years to make them believe they can come to him with anything. Not Dark, but exactly legal to use on Muggles either.

Daphne looks up and smiles at me as I approach. I smile politely back and keep walking past her. A brief look of surprise crosses her face. Probably the fact her spell didn't pull me over to her. I give her a little wink. I grab a nearby table and work on my drink.

Watching the little dance Daphne is leading the clones on; I trigger my Dark Mark detector. I am only mildly surprised when no answering ping comes back to me. I find this very intriguing. Is she an unmarked follower or something else? I notice the men seem to be cycling through as she talks. Eventually they seem to lose interest and wander off and forget about her.

The next hour passes in a pleasant blur. Several pleasant young ladies stop by my table to talk. I think most of them were just peeved over Daphne taking all the attention from them. Still, it was a nice way to spend the time.

I noticed Daphne glancing my way every so often. I think my resistance to her charm is bothering her. That or she is simply dying to jump my bones.

Once the crowd around her dissipated, she stood up and strutted over to my table. I can't call it walking because it was the sexist thing I have ever seen still dressed. The tight black dress, blonde hair, and all the right curves added up nicely. She might be a Pureblood Princess but she could still give a Veela a run for her money. Even Ron admitted that at the start of Sixth year and getting him to say anything nice about a Slytherin was almost impossible.

"May I join you?" she asks in a throaty voice.

"Please."

She settles gently down into the seat opposite me. "You didn't come over to visit me," she accuses me.

A mischievous smirk crosses my lips. "You seemed to be entertained enough. Can I get you a fresh drink?" At her nod, I signal the waitress. The young woman takes the order and leaves with a smile.

"So, what do you do?" Daphne asks.

"I guess you could call me a government consultant for troubleshooting unusual problems," I answer with a smile.

"Really," she drawls. I note a spark in her eyes at that. "That sounds so interesting. Anything exciting happen for you today? I am with the Education Ministry. Nothing ever happens there."

I shrug casually. "The wandies had one of their Darkies turn on his own. Maybe now they can clean up their own bloody mess and leave us normal people alone." You could have used her eyes as saucers at that.

"Wandies?" she asked. I notice an odd bit of fear and triumph in her eyes.

I wave the question away. "Sorry, office slang. Afraid I can't really go into it."

A seductively coy smile crosses Daphne's face. "Come on. I insist. Imperious."

I have to hand it to her; I never noticed her drawing her wand. For that matter, where had she hidden a wand in that tight black sleeveless dress? Hmm, be interesting to find out.

Daphne leant forward in her chair. To an observer it would look as if she was just flirting and whispering in my ear. "You are going to walk out of this pub with me. Act casual." The gorgeous blonde gracefully stood up with a sexy smile on her face and led the way out of the pub. I smile and wink at one or two of the 'rejected' suitors that glare at me as we leave.

We step out on to the street and she takes me across the street to a nice hotel. Daphne leads the way to the lift. Once on the lift she ignores me and stands looking at the numbers as they change. I use the opportunity to do a little checking of my own. Damn but that woman can fill out a dress!

We walk in silence to a third floor room. Daphne pulls a key card from a small purse and opens the door. She gestures for me to enter the room in front of her. It is a standard "business executive" hotel room with a queen sized bed, a desk, a couch, and a kitchenette.

“Sit on the couch,” she commands me. I comply.

“Now, tell me everything the Ministry of Defence knows about the magical war.”

“Not much,” I admit with a shrug. “After all, bureaucrats are the same all over, magical or Muggle. They never believe anything until its rubbed in their noses like a pack of bad puppies.”

Daphne looks a bit taken aback by my manner. People under and Imperious tend to be very literal under the spell. When given a task, they must be told to act normally while under the curse or they will walk around like they are robots. I should have been giving her just the facts and no personal observations.

Realization sparks as her wand appears in her hand. (It must have been some kind of Disillusionment spell. Bummer.) “The Imperious didn’t have any effect on you.”

A wandless Disarmer throws the wand across the room. “Five points to Slytherin, Ms. Greengrass.”

The shocked witch stares at me for a few seconds. Finally, she says, “Potter. I thought you looked familiar. The tan and suit threw me off. The last time I saw you, The-Boy-Who-Lived was a tramp in baggy clothes.”

I allowed the glamour on my scar to fade as I smirked at her. “Well, imagine my surprise to find the ‘Pureblood Princess’ sitting in a Muggle pub and chatting up strange blokes.” Greengrass winces at the reminder.

I lean back in the couch. “So, what were you doing there? I doubt Riddle would have you working in there and you’re not one of his marked slaves anyway.”

“You saw the list Malfoy sent to the Prophet.”

“Something like that,” I agree.

“May I open my purse?”

“Slowly.”

Daphne opens the small purse at her side and pulls out a small leather billfold. She opens it and shows me. It contains an Unspeakable badge. “I am tasked with monitoring responses from the Muggle government to our troubles. We have others inside their Ministries, but I get the pubs since I am technically still in training. People like to talk once they’ve had a few.”

“Especially to a hot, young woman in a sexy little black dress. It’s so movie cliché that a Muggleborn must have given them the idea,” I comment with a mischievous smile.

“So, are you going to arrest me?” I ask with a grin. “You can frisk me if I can frisk you back.”

Daphne looks shocked for a moment before breaking out in laughter. “Oh, Merlin! I never thought I would hear such a cheesy pick-up line from shy little Harry Potter. A couple of years ago you would have passed out from shock if I’d even spoken to you.”

“Depends about what you talked about,” I admit. “School or the war, fine. A trip to Hogsmeade would have called for Madam Pomfrey’s attentions.”

Daphne pulls her laughter under control. “No, I won’t be arresting you. I heard about your ‘contract’. Very Slytherin the way you took advantage of the loopholes and manipulated Dumbledore and the Ministry.”

“I see myself these days as a Slythindor,” I pretend to preen as I rub my nails against my suit coat.

Daphne smiled at that. “School wasn’t the same without you and Malfoy. I actually found I missed it.”

“Do tell.”

Daphne settled more comfortably into her chair. Ever hear the phrase, ‘her legs went on forever’? Not sure if it was true in Daphne’s case, but I would be willing to find out. For scientific reasons only of course.

“It was like having the second string Quidditch teams in the World Cup. Nott and Pansy tried to rule Slytherin but had neither the power, magical or family, nor leadership to step in to Malfoy’s spot. They spent most of their time plotting against one another for the top spot.

“The Gryffindors weren’t much better. Granger fronted the cult of Dumbledore with most of the Ravenclaws while Weasley carried your banner. He tried but he didn’t have your power and leadership. He was marginally effective though because he wasn’t trying to get control for himself. He still had you as a figurehead. The rest of your crew joined him leaving Granger the odd witch out.

“The war got worse outside of course and a lot of students lost family, but inside the school it was really quiet. Most of the school kept their heads down. Occasionally the war came near the school or one of the would-be replacements for you and Malfoy would try to rally their side, but nothing much happened. Everyone walked nervous waiting for the axe to fall.”

“Sounds like it was better for everyone that I wasn’t there,” I comment idly.

“For school work maybe, but the school definitely felt less without you there.” If she is lying, I can’t pick up any sign. She appears to be telling the truth from her point of view.

“So, how did you end up an Unspeakable?” I ask.

She smiles. “My mum worked in their research department and my uncle was a field agent under Croaker. My father owns a potions ingredients supplier in Cornwall. He likes it but I always knew I wanted to be an Unspeakable like my mum and her brother. I think that’s why the Hat put me in Slytherin.”

"Stupid thing wanted to put me in Slytherin too. But I wanted away from Malfoy. Plus Ron told me all kinds of good things about Gryffindor and bad about Slytherin."

Daphne affects a fake pout. "Too bad. It would have been nice to have someone intelligent to talk to in the common room."

I give her a wink. "I'm sure if I'd sat in your compartment on that first trip to Hogwarts I would have thrown myself into Slytherin." She lets out a deep laugh that does interesting things to her upper anatomy.

"You are a bad boy, Mr. Potter," she accuses me.

"I am shocked that you would say such a thing, Ms. Greengrass. I was the Gryffindor poster boy."

"My mum was in school a year ahead of your parents," Daphne comments with a smirk. "I have heard many stories about your father and his friends. Especially your father before he started dating your mum. In fact, I have reason to believe she has personal knowledge of his escapades. So, I know all about Gryffindor poster boys."

Now I have to laugh. Sirius hinted that Dad's "Prongs" nickname had a double meaning once so I have no doubt her insinuation might be true.

"Since I seem to have ruined your evening's assignment, maybe you can join me in the pub downstairs and you can tell me some of the stories you know, Daphne."

Daphne's smile seems a bit shy as she says, "I think that would be a lot of fun, Harry."

Part VII – The Burrow

"One loyal friend is worth ten thousand relatives." - Euripides

11 August 1999

I wake up with the feel of another body curled up against my chest. It only takes a moment for my head to clear and remember exactly where I am.

Daphne and I spent two hours in the hotel pub drinking. I heard more words from her in thirty minutes than in over five years of school. She had some very funny stories about both Dad and Sirius. If the old dog was still alive, I could blackmail him for decades.

We found ourselves back in the hotel room and clothes became optional. I took advantage of her quick trip into the loo to erect several wards including Apparition, Portkey, proximity and privacy. What can I say? I believe in safe sex.

The next couple of hours we shagged ourselves raw. I will admit that I was surprised when I found that Daphne seemed rather inexperienced, but she more than made up for it in enthusiasm.

“Tempus”

I moan as the time appears in the air above me. It’s almost ten in the morning. I carefully extract myself from the bed and cast a Silencing Charm around it. I give room service a quick call and hope into the shower. Magic can clean you off but nothing wakes you up like a good shower.

Okay, maybe the thing that made me tired in the first place but I was in a hurry.

Breakfast arrived as I exited the loo. I pay off the delivery guy and roll the cart into the room. A quick check fails to reveal any magic. I drop the Silencing Charm and pour out two cups of tea. The noise is enough to wake sleeping beauty.

“What time is it?” she drowsily asks as she sits up and holds the sheet to her chest.

“A bit after ten,” I admit as I sit back with my cup.

"Ten o'clock!" she shrieks. "I was supposed to be in training two hours ago! Oh bugger!"

Daphne jumps out of the bed with the sheet still clutched to her chest. I watch with interest as she runs to the shower. I briefly ponder mentioning that holding a sheet in the front does nothing for the rear but decide I prefer the view to being a gentleman.

--HPM--

I dropped the anti-travel wards whilst Daphne caught a quick shower. In a whirlwind, Daphne gave me a quiet kiss goodbye and promised to Owl me. Then she was off with a crack. I didn't mention that fact only Hedwig was exempt from my aura suppression. The damned feathered menace kept biting me until I figured out a way for her to track me.

--HPM--

I did not include everything that Malfoy gave me to the 'confession' I sent out. Getting their names listed publicly would send most of them into hiding. Even the ones only named for taking bribes would keep their heads down. However, Malfoy knew a lot more than names. He was Riddle's moneymen. In Muggle business terms, he was the Chief Financial Officer for Death Eater Incorporated.

Even when the money wasn't his, Malfoy oversaw all expenditures and investments. (Buy into a company and then the DE's just happen to wipe out the competition. Or sell out a hot stock and then attack them.) Malfoy also managed the supply of all the Death Eater safe houses. Lower level DE's did the work but he controlled it all. I can't get at the goblin-controlled money, but I can use the information in other ways.

I took the tube to Green Park station from the hotel. Only four stops from King's Cross on the Victoria line, Green Park is a hub for three separate tube lines. It is rather busy but what I am looking for is on the Victoria line platform.

I get off the train and casually wait for the crowd to disperse. Between trains, the platform is rather sparse; only a few travellers and students with too much time on their hands remain hanging about. I have ten minutes before the next train.

Casting a wandless Notice-Me Not Charm, I wander down to the end of the platform. A tattered poster advertising a David Copperfield show with the stage magician and his ‘assistants’ pictured on it hung forgotten on the wall. I walk up to it and say, “Slytherin over all.”

One of the assistants looks up at me. “Slytherins forever.” The wall next to the poster shimmers for a moment and I walk through.

The password-protected entrance was just a failsafe. This place is under a Fidelius cast by Riddle. Malfoy was the Secret Keeper. The use of the master password made me acceptable to all of the other wards on the place.

The room beyond reminds me of the brief look I got in Second year of the Slytherin common room. It was a large room with a low ceiling. A couple of Death Eater clad wizards are talking quietly in the far corner. They had their hoods down and masks off. It looked like they were arguing and kept pointing at a paper on the table in front of them. Several doors lead off the faux common room.

This wasn’t Riddle’s base of operations or even a training area. This would hurt them a lot worse.

I walk to the door that is closest to me and away from the arguing Death Eaters. It was a dorm with a dozen bunk beds spread around the room. A full potions cabinet stands next to the door. This must be an infirmary. I curse myself as I realize I should have made Malfoy draw me a map.

I take a selection of the potions from the cabinet. Potions tend to react poorly to Shrinking Charms so I can only take so many. I roll a metallic ball the size of a baby’s fist under a bunk and close the door.

Moving to the next door, I find what I was looking for. It looks like the business office it is. Reports dot the walls with charts and plans. All it

needs is a computer and a Muggle accountant would be right at home. The witch sitting inside looks up at my intrusion.

“What do you want?” she snaps.

“My apologies, Madam Edgecrombe.” She starts to wind up for a rant when I hit her with a Stunner. She deserves this for what happened Fifth year. Forcing her daughter to give up the DA indirectly contributed to Sirius’s death. I take her robe and drop a pair of the metallic balls onto the floor. I transfigure the unconscious witch into an action figure and put her in my pocket.

I pull the robe on before stepping out of the room. Now I walk directly towards the two wizards. They stop talking as I approach.

“Did you see this?” one of them demands. “Malfoy is trying to save his own skin by ensuring the rest of us lose ours!”

“I tell you that doesn’t make any sense!” his companion retorts. “The Master is winning! Why would he try to leave now?”

“Maybe he heard Potter was coming back?” I suggest mildly.

Both of them scoff at the idea. “Malfoy hates bloody Potter with a passion. The Master and Bella are the only ones more ... committed to his death. I think Malfoy would gladly lose the war just to kill Potter.” I wonder what other word he wanted to use. Psychotic maybe? Obsessive? Fixated? Take your pick.

“But the Master ordered that he is the only one to kill Potter unless it is in battle. We can defend ourselves but not seek him out. Malfoy might do this if he thought it was his path to get Potter,” the other Death Eater points out.

“That’s good to know,” I nod. I hit the pair of them with Stunners and transfigure them into action figures. I drop the Death Eater robes onto the table next to the copy of the Prophet they were arguing over.

I start to put them in my pocket when an evil thought occurs to me. A little bit of work and I’m done. I do the same to Marietta’s mother.

Putting my toys away, I finish searching the complex.

I have to hand it to Malfoy. He obviously stole the idea for this place from Platform 9 3/4, but it was a wonderful supply depot. Brooms, cauldrons, potions supplies, you name it, it is here somewhere. It is also the storage area for all of the items stolen during the DE raids, mostly jewellery, art, or rare magical items.

As tempting as it is, I have no way of taking it all with me. Staying isn't an option either since I can't take down the Fidelius Charm without Riddle's permission as the caster. I transfigure a couple of boxes into trunks and start selecting my own booty. My best find was a Pensieve sitting next to a pile of captured wands.

I shrink the trunks and slip them into my suit pocket. I drop a couple of the metallic balls in all of the storerooms and head for the door. My approach causes the wall to shimmer into an opening automatically. I pause just long enough to tap a final ball with my wand and drop it to the floor.

My timing is perfect as I step onto the platform. A train had just arrived and was filling up with passengers. I cast a final temporary ward before slipping my wand back into my sleeve. Then I simply slip into the crowd.

--HPM--

Ten minutes later the magically enhanced balls containing a mixture of phosphorous and magnesium grew to the size of basketballs. As the timer ran out on the activated ball, all of the balls started to burn ferociously. The balls threw out globes of white-hot phosphorus creating fires wherever they landed. Within minutes, the entire complex burned like the heart of a raging volcano.

The temporary ward held back the fire and heat from the Muggles on the platform but the smoke quickly forced the evacuation of the platform. The fire destroyed everything including the ward stones used for the Fidelius Charm. When Muggle fire fighters were

eventually able to enter the area, they concluded that a gas main leak caused the damage.

The fact that no gas main passed the area was never noted. The Obligators do excellent work.

--HPM--

I arrive at the edge of the wards around the Burrow at bit before the time on Ron's note. I can feel that the wards are much more substantial then the last time I was here just before Sixth year started. I wonder if Bill did them before he was murdered by the DE, or was it done in response to the attack that cost Bill and his parents their lives.

After a quick diagnostic, I step across the ward boundary. I can feel a ward's alert heading towards the house. It was a 'doorbell' ward rather than a defensive one. It feels good in an obscure way to know I am still keyed into the Weasley family wards.

"Harry is that you?" I hear Ron's voice call out.

"No, it's Snivelous and I've come to get that Potions homework you still owe from your Fourth year," I answer sarcastically.

"You're too clean for that, mate. No oil in your hair either," Ron replies with a grin. "Come on inside. The family is looking forward to seeing you."

Ron grabs me in a sudden hug. Then he lets go and steps back. "Harry, after they took you away, I took a hard look at what was going on around me. I'm sorry I wasn't there with you when you faced Malfoy and his trolls." He sighed. "Hermione was always right and after the Ministry I thought supporting her would help keep us out of trouble. I should have realized it would find you anyway without me there to help out."

I am a bit shocked at Ron's confession. He's grown up a bit in the last three years. "Ah, well, you're still a git but I guess we can work something out.

"I have to ask. What the hell happened to Hermione?"

Ron grimaces at the question. "After they convicted you, Hermione and I started making a lot of noise about how you were treated. Dumbledore called us to his office and made us swear a magically binding oath not to share what he was going to reveal. That is when he told us about using the dementors to allow you access to Voldemort's mind."

Ron stops and adds, "I think he tried the same thing in Fifth year with your lessons with Snape."

I already knew that. Aloud, I simply say, "You might be right. So what happened next?"

"The Professor explained it was the only way to get you enough magical training to meet Voldemort as an equal." Ron snorts, "I think Hermione was jealous of the information you would be getting access to." I nod in understanding. I note that Ron can say Riddle's fake name without stammering now.

Ron looks at me quizzically, "Did you realize that in order for Dumbledore to move the blood wards to Azkaban that you would have needed to have family there also?"

I'm gobsmacked at that. "I never thought about it."

Ron smirks. "That fat tub of lard cousin of yours was in the cell on the other side of the wall. He was in a Muggle jail for beating up a Muggle Auror during a football riot about three weeks before your encounter with Malfoy. Dumbledore had him moved and put into that cell. They moved him back the same day they let you out." Ron's smirk grows into a grin. "I heard he'd lost over ten stone during his stay."

I'm stunned at the news. "I can't believe that bastard would do that. Even to Dudley, that's harsh."

Ron only shrugs. "After all the things he'd done to you alone, I'm sure he deserved it a lot more than you, mate." I guess I can agree with that but it's still wrong.

Returning to the original topic, Ron says, “After we left Dumbledore’s office, Hermione and I had a huge argument. She felt Dumbledore knew what needed to be done to stop Voldemort. She said if you could think about this logically, you’d understand and agree to do this. She claimed that since the start of Fifth year you were too emotional and out of control and Dumbledore was just doing what he had to do to make sure the Light side won. She blames the whole Ministry trip and losing Sirius on your mental instability.

“I told her she had her head so far up Dumbledore’s ass that his beard was turning brown and bushy. You can imagine that it went downhill from there.”

I have to laugh at the image Ron’s words conjure up. I choke out, “I want to see that memory of her face.”

Am I pissed that my one of my two ‘best friends’ turned on me like that? You’re damned right I am. But it is no use taking it out on Ron.

“So, her and Weatherby?”

Ron’s face flushed a bit. “After leaving school she started working for the DMLE’s solicitor’s office. With Scrimgeour in office and supporting Dumbledore, Percy was suddenly all positive in his praise for the professor. He and Hermione worked on a couple of new laws and treaties together, including the contract you signed. I never even knew they were dating until they announced their engagement. They got married six months ago.”

I allow a small shudder. “That’s wrong on so many levels; I’m not even going to go into it.”

Ron’s lips twitch in amusement. “Tell me about it, mate. It didn’t do my ego any good to have her ditch me for Percy. They probably use a checklist in bed.”

I had to snort at that. “So let me guess. You and Luna?”

Ron laughs. “She set her sights on Colin Creevey when she decided he could follow her around and take pictures of her creatures. Poor boy didn’t know what hit him. I was with Lavender for Sixth year, but I’ve been seeing your ex since just before she left school.”

“You and Cho?” I ask in shock. I never saw that one coming. “What did you do? Cry on each other?”

“Hey!” he yells in mock anger. “She got over that, Boy-Who-Lives-To-Make-Girls-Cry. She is much happier with me.”

“Now there is a cumbersome title,” I grumble.

Ron winks. “Come on. We’ve been out here too long. Merlin only knows what the twins have gotten into.”

I follow Ron into the Burrow. I think I like this new Ron. He blended the best of my first friend my own age with Bill’s confidence and his father’s humour.

The first two people I see on entering the Burrow are Fred and George. They look a bit crestfallen as I walk in to door.

Fred steps forward, “Harry, great to see you. Do you like our new display?” He points to the floating representation of the mark I left over Malfoy Manor.

“The Prophet is calling it the Potter Mark after you left that little package for the Aurors to pick up today,” George adds.

I left the three “action figures” with the newly named Potter Mark burnt into their foreheads at the same spot as my scar. Hey, if they want to be into body art, I’m just trying to help them out. Too bad I didn’t think of it with Malfoy. Hmm, maybe I can go visit him. The idea has possibilities.

“Hi, Harry.”

I look up to see a shyly smiling Cho Chang walk into the room. "Hi, Cho. Nice to see you again." Then I notice something. "Or should I say, 'Hello Mrs. Weasley'?"

"Bugger, you noticed," Ron whines playfully. "I wanted to surprise you."

"Believe me, I am plenty surprised..."

A sudden bang interrupted me. We turn to see Fred hanging from his ankles and wearing a Muggle schoolgirl uniform. He was vainly trying to keep the dress up while glaring at me. George was too busy laughing to try to help his twin.

"Whoops," I say innocently. "Did you have an accident, Fred?"

"How did you do that?" the gravitationally challenged cross-dressing Weasley demanded. "Did Ron warn you?"

Ron raised his hands to protest his innocence. "Keep me out of this. You two hooligans wanted to challenge his right to call himself Mr. Talon, so this is your problem."

Cho wrapped her hands around her husband's waist. (That is still freaking me out.) "Come into the living room, Harry. The rest of them are waiting in there."

"Don't worry, Fred," I call back as we walk out of the kitchen. "It'll wear off eventually if George can't figure it out." Several curses, figurative and literal, follow me out of the room.

Charlie, Fleur, Ginny, and Neville are waiting in the next room. With them is a sixteen-year-old Veela clone of Fleur's that has to be Gabrielle. Sitting on her lap was a little boy about eighteen months old.

"What did you do to my brothers?" Ginny asks in an amused tone.

"I might have modified the magic for the little prank they had waiting for me and redirected it at Fred," I admit with a smile.

"Nice," Neville grins.

"Arry, you remember my sister, Gabrielle?" Fleur asks.

"I think so," I answer her.

I nod politely to Gabrielle, "But you look a bit older than I would have expected."

The younger Veela blushes prettily. "Hi, Harry. I was just shy of twelve when you pulled me from the lake. Veela look much younger than their age until they hit puberty. I was a First year during the Tournament."

"Well," I smile, "that explains that question. I always wondered why they let you be there when no other family members were there for the second task. I'm sure Viktor had someone at home he would have missed more than Hermione who he'd just met. And who is this?"

Gabrielle helped the little boy stand on his chubby little legs. "Harry, meet your godson, Ted Lupin."

I crouch down to the boy's eyelevel and look at him in shock. I could see Remus and Tonks in him but there is no way those two were off enough to name me godfather. I was in jail for Merlin's sake!

"Did you say..."

"Godfather?" Ron jumped in. "Yep, they had me stand in for you. Poor guy was only four months old when the Death Eaters hit us here in the raid that cost us Mum, Dad, Bill, Remus and Tonks. They would have gotten Gabrielle and Teddy too but Gabby had taken him down to the pond and hid with him when she heard the first curses starting."

I close my eyes in remembered pain. "And then they tortured them until the Aurors came." I open my eyes and look at Gabrielle. "You must have been scared to death hiding there listening to all that."

I can see tears in her beautiful blue eyes. "I should have done something," she says in a soft, pained voice. "You would have."

I put a hand on her shoulder. I'm not very good at the touchy-feely supportive crap, but this poor kid deserves it. "Gabrielle, believe me when I say there was nothing you or anyone could have done. It was all a trap to kill Aurors. Voldemort and his entire Inner Circle were here too. You did the smart, responsible thing and protected Theo. I know Mr. and Mrs. Weasley and Remus and Tonks would have wanted you to do exactly what you did."

Teddy noticed the tears in Gabrielle's eyes and started to fuss. Gabrielle took that as an excuse to leave the room. "He's getting hungry. I'll go get him something to eat." She stood up and picked up the boy. She started into the kitchen (where we could still hear Fred trying to reverse the prank) but stopped and turned.

"Thank you Harry. It means a lot to hear you say that." Then she was gone.

"I thank you too, Harry," Fleur said in a soft voice. "You have been her hero since the Tournament. I think hearing it from you might help her get past it."

"It was the truth." I point to my scar. "Thanks to this damn thing, I saw everything Riddle did during the whole attack and just afterward."

Well, that is a great way of silencing a room.

George chose that moment to come into the room. "Harry, old friend, can we get Fred down now? He's turning red from dangling in the doorway. None of the normal release spells are working."

"If I must," I grin. "Mischief Managed." A loud crash comes from the kitchen. George turns to look in on his twin and starts to laugh.

Fred moans from the kitchen. "Merlin, I hate you, Harry."

I smirk at the twins coming into the room. “Just think, if not for Riddle and Dumbledore you could have had to deal with a Harry Potter raised by the Marauders.”

Neville pretends to shiver. “Hogwarts wouldn’t be standing anymore.” The rest of the room starts to laugh while Fred and George look thoughtful. Personally, those two looking thoughtful is scarier than Riddle could ever be.

I feel a small ping as someone crosses the boundary of the trip ward I erected outside the Burrow. Ron notices my change in focus.

“Harry, what’s wrong?”

“Expecting any other company?”

Ron glances at his brothers and then back to me. “No, no one else. I didn’t even tell these guys you were coming until an hour ago. This is just our normal family dinner night.”

“It must be Percy or Hermione,” Charlie comments with a frown. Only a Weasley or a spouse would cross Bill’s wards without at least telling me they were coming.” As the eldest surviving Weasley, it made sense the wards would focus on him.

“Neither one someone I really want to deal with.” I stand up. “Well, it was nice seeing you all, but... Oh, bugger!”

“Anti-Apparition and Portkey wards just went up,” Charlie said whilst standing up. “And a bunch of Order members just crossed the wards.”

“I doubt there here for afters,” Fred comments.

“After eating the last pudding you attempted I must agree,” George shoots back.

“I guess they didn’t like me sending copies of the contracts they made me sign to the press.”

Ron grins. "Or it could have been the large fire you created in the middle of London."

"The Malfoy confession letter spun them up pretty good too," Ginny adds.

"Time for me to exit. But first, tell Dumbledore that I let it slip I left Malfoy in the Tower of London under a Notice-Me-Not Charm locked in one of the cells"

"A test?" Neville asks. I just wink at him.

"Bye folks."

To their confusion, I run up the stairs to the bedrooms. It wasn't a moment too soon as I hear the front door open. Silencing Charms stop them from hearing me on the stairs and a spell of Riddle's own creation shields me from Moody's 'All Seeing Eye'. A WWW Extendable Ear Mk II lets me hear what is happening downstairs without the old telltale wire.

"Where is he?" I hear Percy demand.

"You tripped his ward and he left you prat," Ron answers.

"We have a warrant for Potter's arrest for treason, Ronald," Percy declares.

"Treason?" Ginny yells. "How could Harry be guilty of treason?"

"By his wilful attempts to bring down the Ministry, Miss Weasley," Dumbledore says coming into the room.

Interesting. The contract only said I couldn't be prosecuted for crimes in pursuit of Tommy and his merry idiots. Charging me with treason neatly side steps that.

"So, its Fifth year all over again," Neville comments.

"No, Neville," Hermione's voice says. She must have come in with Dumbledore. "Potter is guilty this time. I could easily take this case to the Wizengamot and win."

"That's not hard," Fred throws in.

"Any case against Harry is going to come back guilty," George adds.

"After all, the fix is in," Fred finishes.

"Enough of this! Where did Potter go?"

"E went to ze Tower of London. 'E zaid he had hidden Malfoy in one of the cells," Fleur says quietly. I notice her accent seems to have made a sudden return.

"Fleur, what are you doing?" Ron demands.

"I am zorry, Ron, but if they have a warrant, zen we must honour it," Fleur says with a quiet dignity.

"At least one of you have your priorities straight," Percy gloats.

"I am very sorry it comes to this, but I can't have you warning Harry," Dumbledore says. "Oblivate!"

Wow, he really is a bastard.

Part VIII – The Tower

"He is one of those people who would be enormously improved by death." - H. H. Munro (Saki)

13 August 1999

"They are coming, Sir Harry."

I look down at my 'scouts'. Anyone claiming the Shrieking Shack as the most haunted place in England never visited the Tower of London. Kings, Queens, Princes, rogues; they are all here.

I nod gratefully to the ghost of the young boy in front of me. “Thank you, your Highness. How many are there?”

“I counted but twelve, Sir Harry,” the ghost of Prince Edward V. “They are coming by boat through Traitor’s Gate.”

The ghost of Edward’s younger brother, Richard, spoke up. “Sir Harry, they are really scary and act like they are expecting to be attacked.”

I wish TimeTurners could allow me to go back to the 1480’s and prevent the deaths of these two boys. I never knew that the various Muggle noble lines occasionally married into the Wizarding world. Apparently this include the House of York, Edward was a Hogwarts student at the time of his execution for being the son of the loser of a power struggle. Richard was waiting to turn eleven to start school.

“Be careful, kinsman,” Edward said with a small smile. “We wouldn’t want for you to join us here permanently.” The Princes of the Tower’s mum was a maternal first cousin to the Potters of their time. I really need to learn some family history.

“I will, my prince.”

The two ghost boys run off laughing. They see the coming battle as a giant game. I guess after over five hundred years tonight will seem like a nice break in the routine.

“They are good lads,” another ghost offers.

I glance at Fawkes’ namesake. “Are you sure this will work?”

“It should,” the ghost of Guy Fawkes laughed. “But then the last time I tried to blow something up it didn’t work out too well!” He could at least try to be supportive.

The Tower is ready to repeal any attackers.

--HPM--

I gambled on Snape running to Riddle with the news of where Malfoy was being held.

The Muggle guards were not a problem. Dobby delivered a strong sleeping potion to ensure they slept soundly all night but woke with the memory that they stood their shifts and night passed with nothing of interest to report. It was a liquid Confundus mixed with a sleeping potion. Wonderful stuff. A drop or two at dinner and its lights out. Then up in the morning as if nothing happened.

I had never been to the Tower before so one thing I forgot about was the ghosts. They were bloody everywhere! Half the Headless Hunt must make this Tower their home. When the guards fell asleep, the ghost arrived to investigate. I found myself facing over a dozen ghosts including Queen Anne Boleyn, Guy Fawkes and the Princes of the Tower.

I never talked so quick in my life. I was short on time but the ghosts could throw a wrench in my plans. Try explaining Tommy and his Hem Kissers plus my involvement in five minutes or less. It's not easy.

Prince Edward grew excited when I mentioned I was a Potter. His cousin, Alfred Potter was a year ahead of him at Hogwarts. After that, he insisted on calling me Sir Harry as the Potters of his time were titled.

“If you are anything like Alfred you need the title to help get out of trouble,” the cheeky ghost prince claimed. “That boy could find trouble in his sleep! Ever wonder how that passage behind the statue collapsed? And with that hair, I bet you are the same way!” Richard giggled and nodded. I guess the Potter hair isn’t the only thing that breeds true.

To my surprise, the ghost of Queen Anne took charge of the ghosts. In minutes she had them organized and on their way. She was bright, charming and a total fox. Henry must have been a total git for tossing her aside.

That was how I found myself working beside one of the most famous conspirators in British history. There is something poetic about the

ghost of Guy Fawkes, namesake of Dumbledore's own phoenix, helping me preparing for the Death Eaters arrival. Turns out the old solder was a Squib from a now lost Pureblood family given to a Muggle family to raise as their own

--HPM--

.The Death Eaters pulled their small boat up to the dock inside Traitor's Gate with a soft bump. The magically propelled boat made no noise save the sound of the water being pushed aside. The boat hadn't even come to a complete stop before the first of the Death Eaters leapt to the dock with their wands drawn.

Most Death Eaters fight as individuals without any real teamwork. They rely on fear and the Unforgivables to get them through any fight. The Killing Curse removes much of a superior fighter's advantage. Without shields, one can dodge only for so long before being hit once. And once is all that damn spell needs.

These Death Eaters were moving as a unit. They looked more like Muggle commandos then Death Eaters.

The Death Eaters were starting to move away from the docks and down a path used by tourists towards the interior of the Tower grounds when the ghost of Guy Fawkes appeared before them.

Guy bowed before the Death Eaters in a grand style. Rising up, he proudly proclaimed,

"Remember, remember the fifth of November,

The gunpowder, treason and plot,

I know of no reason

Why the gunpowder treason

Should ever be forgot."

With that, I whisper a parseltongue activation word.

A series of explosions erupt from the meter-tall light posts lining the path the Death Eaters were following. Each solid looking wooden post was filled with Muggle explosives I borrowed from a British Army base. The posts were conjured and added for tonight's surprise.

The tight pathway was filled with explosions as the wooden posts detonated sending wooden splinters, some up to a foot long, flying into the midst of the Death Eaters.

"Damn me if that didn't go better than the last time!" Guy comments excitedly as he appears next to me.

"I couldn't think of anything that rhymed with the 13th of August," he admits with a huge grin. The weird thing is his smile is the same as those stupid masks.

I ignore him as I move into the open with my wand drawn.

I don't need to bother. Four of the Death Eaters are most definitely dead. The rest are wounded and stunned.

"Accio Wands!" Eleven wands jump into my hand. I guess the explosion destroyed someone's wand.

I summon their masks to get a look at their faces. Payday! Both the male LeStranges and McNair in one sweep! 75,000 Galleons is not a bad take for a night's work. Too bad Peter isn't here too. That would really make my night.

Ten minutes later and I have the whole lot transfigured into action dolls with my mark on their foreheads. A couple of Repairos takes care of the explosion damage and their boat is shrunk inside my pocket. I glance around to make sure no sign of the fight remains behind.

"You do good work, Sir Harry." The ghost of Queen Anne is standing behind me.

"Thank you, your majesty, but I am not really a knight."

She waves that issue off with a regal sweep of her hand. "Nonsense. Prince Edward said you are, so you are. After all, true nobility is not born. It is earned. The Ghosts of Hogwarts have kept Us informed of events there and We have heard your story. The one you call the Bloody Baron was in Our service in life. He witnessed your fight with the young Dark wizards and We trust his account of the fight.

"We dead may not interfere in the events of the living," the ghost explained. "But We see much. For defending Our home, We will give you this much. Look to the place of the dead where the Evil One returned."

I look at the ghost queen in surprise. She obviously meant Little Hangleton. Malfoy couldn't tell me where Tommy had his main headquarters. The DMLE supposedly covered that area after my Fifth year (after Fudge admitted Riddle was back) and found nothing.

I decide not to point out that the reason the Death Eaters came here was my bait and said, "Thank you your Majesty. I will look into that."

A small smile curled the ghost queen's lips. She reached out and tapped me on the chest with a shockingly solid finger. "I do not refer to this Tower as Our home, naughty boy, rather Our whole island." I feel my face starting to flush as she merrily laughs and fades from view.

Cheeky ghosts. How did she know what I was thinking?

--HPM--

16 August 1999

I sent my latest batch of action figures into the DMLE via postal owl. I included a note saying that unless my money was delivered to Ron I would consider the contract void. I didn't really need the money but I didn't want the bastards thinking I would clean up their mess for free either.

I decided to spend the day working on my boat.

The day I bought the boat, a Yank in the slip next to mine told me BOAT is actually an acronym for ‘Bring Out Another Thousand’ and that the definition of boat is a hole in the water you throw money into. I realized very quickly he was right. There is always something on the boat that needs to be worked on; even a boat with magical assistance. I’ve found it very relaxing. Sort of like working in the Dursley’s garden without the obnoxious harpy complaining about the damage I’m doing to her roses.

I spent two days waxing the hull, touching up the teak and generally unwinding. I take the dingy out once to explore the area. Between the fights, ghosts, and just being back in England, I really miss my island life.

I am sitting in the cockpit of my boat with a pint sitting next to me and reading the Daily Prophet. The sun is setting over the Thames right now and for once you can see the sun. Thanks to all the stuff in the air, the sunset is a very pretty shade of red. Some boats have fake owls mounted in the rigging to scare away other birds from landing there. I bet I’m the only one on the Thames with a real Snowy Owl napping atop their mast.

I pick up the paper and start scanning the stories for a second time. It is hard to tell who is more screwed right now, the Ministry or the Death Munchers. All due to little old me.

Tommy’s boys and girls are being attacked whenever they stick their slimy heads out from hiding. The Aurors or their own neighbours have captured fifteen Death Munchers since the release of Malfoy’s ‘Confession’ and every bribe recipient called off sick the previous day. Apparently, it had only taken a couple ugly incidents in Diagon Alley for them to decide discretion was by far the better part of valour.

About time the sheep woke up.

The Ministry is screwed for the exact same reason. The ‘Confession’ hit them hard. They were trying to make it out that I was using

Malfoy's list as an attack to undermine the Ministry. As if I would stoop so low to do such a thing.

Stop snickering. I'm serious.

Okay, so I would be that petty. But we both know the list was real. If I was going to fake it, I would have included Percy's name just for kicks.

Unfortunately for them, the public isn't buying it. The Prophet is filled with editorials calling for new Wizengamot elections and investigations into the Ministry departments. The Ministry is accusing me of treason by using "lies and insinuations against upstanding citizens to weaken the legitimate government of magical Britain."

The quote wasn't attributed, but it sure sounds like Percy.

I throw the paper down in disgust. I watch the sun finish its decent as I drain the last of my pint. Maybe I'll wander back into London and see if Daphne is working her bar again.

Hmm, that didn't come out quite right.

Part IX – Concluding the Contract

"I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter." - Sir Winston Churchill

18 August 1999

Twelve hours ago, I was snuggled up to a hot naked woman in a warm bed. It took a lot of willpower to pull me out of that bed.

Daphne just happened to be sitting in the bar in the same seat I found her the first time, except this time no Compulsion Charm was pulling the men over to talk to her. Now it was simply the obvious charms showed so nicely in the tight red dress she was wearing that was bringing them over.

I walked over and cut through the small group of blokes vying for her attention. I loved the seductive but coy smile she threw me when she

noticed me approach. I leant over to give her a possessive kiss that was a clear signal to her admirers. Most of them took the hint and left immediately. A few hung around for a bit but eventually wandered off for greener pastures. (Sorry couldn't help the pun.)

"I thought I'd be alone here all night again," Daphne commented with a fake pout. "I guess playing at the Tower was more fun than playing with me?"

I love the way she just casually tells me the Ministry knew where I captured my last batch. Such a Slytherin to slip it in rather than simply tell me.

"Never," I proclaimed in a seductive manner of my own. "I just did not know if any mortal could handle two nights in a row with the perfection that is Daphne Greengrass."

That earned me a giggle out of the former Pureblood Princess that I would never have expected while we were still in school.

The next morning I regretfully slipped out of bed and made my way back to my real hotel room to change and gather my things.

I hired a car to drive to Little Hangleton. I dressed in purely Muggle fashion and carried a couple hundred pounds worth of camera gear. A cap from a regional football team covered my hair and scar while sunglasses hid my trademark eyes.

The village was a rather rundown looking place with three pubs and a church. It was quant looking place, but it needs a bit of paint and a bunch of work. The English countryside was dotted with these places where the kids all got out as quickly as they could leaving only an older population that complained of the loss of the 'old days'.

Bollocks. If they had, the option when they were young most of them would have taken it too. It was the same crap I heard from Vernon growing up for years.

I started out by walking around the village with my shiny new Canon camera in hand looking for signs of Riddle's presence. I recognized a

few of the sights from Riddles memories but the location of the Riddle house was now empty.

I talked to a few of the locals claiming I was putting together a book of pictures of England's haunted places. Buying a few rounds helped relax them a bit.

One old geezer told me, "Should have been here for the Riddle place. Got torn down years ago but it gave me the creeps just walking by the place."

"We have some crazies that wander the graveyard some nights," one of his pub mates added. "The local constable went to check it out said he found nothing. He refuses to go back now even with all the new sightings. Claims it's a hoax!"

Sounded like a Fidelius, a Memory Charm and an Imperious Curse to me.

Now I am waiting in the graveyard for Riddle or his minions to appear. I am lying atop a fair sized crypt that probably holds two of Little Hangleton's past upstanding citizens. To cut down on the magic use, I have a grey blanket spread out over top of me that fairly well matches the colour of the stone.

I am starting to feel my muscles cramping up when I hear the distinctive sounds of Apparition pops from nearby. I cautiously peer over the side to see five cloaked Death Eaters making their way through the graveyard.

I take a quick look around to make sure they don't have any friends nearby before sliding off the crypt. I take a risk on my invisibility cloak to sneak up behind the group. Silencing Charms prevent me from making any noise. Very carefully, I reach out and lightly grasp the back of the trailing Death Eaters cloak.

The Fidelius Charm is an amazing piece of magic. It hides your location and removes all memory of its present state. It can either remove all memory it ever existed or make people think it no longer exists. It seems to depend on how many changes or memories the

spell has to modify and the amount of magic pushed into the spell. Riddle had Barty Crouch Jr. cast the charm after killing the Riddle House's old caretaker, Frank. According to Riddle's memories, Barty was a strong wizard but not strong enough to completely remove all memory the house ever existed. Riddle was still in his baby-creature state and couldn't cast the spell himself.

The charm also prevented those in the know from being forced to give up the information. However, they can take people in with them as long as they are physically touching them. Madam Pomfrey never knew the secret of Grimmauld Place, but Dumbles often brought her in to patch up wounded Order members. Security people call it ghosting.

I trail along with the Death Eaters until I feel us cross the boundary of the charm. The Riddle House appears in front of us. It looks nothing like the dreams I saw it in before Fifth year. Riddle must have found some house elves. The place is immaculate with neat lawns and opulent gold and marble statuary scattered around the grounds. The house itself is fully restored to a rich, aristocratic state that it probably never knew under the previous owners.

I release my 'host' and hang back a few more feet as I get my next surprise. The Death Eaters have their families here. I guess they went into hiding after Malfoy's Confession hit the Prophet. That makes my job both harder and easier at the same time. With all the people around, there is a high chance of someone accidentally running into me, but it also means a number of strange faces around.

I find a secluded spot and remove my invisibility cloak. I transfigure my grey blanket into a black cloak and put a small Notice-Me-Not Charm on my scar. A silver sickle provides the base material to change into a Death Eater's mask. I put Dad's cloak away and stride confidently towards the front of the house.

Riddle obviously never read the Evil Overlord list. The very first rule is "My Legions of Terror will have helmets with clear Plexiglas visors, not face concealing ones." Guess it was too Muggle for him.

A small ward outside the front door filters out non-marked Death Eaters from entering without permission. Fortunately, my time in Riddle's head gave me the parseltongue password to cross it and walk in between the two low-level Death Eaters standing as sentries.

Once inside, I make a beeline for the basement. Riddle's assembly room and study are on the magically expanded second floor. The basement had the holding cells, potions lab... and the ward stones.

I make my way down the stairs. The Silencing Charm keeps the stairs from squeaking and announcing my descent. That allows me to startle a sentry standing near the cells. Damn, I didn't expect that. Riddle must have a 'guest'.

"You here to play with her too?"

"Why not? Sounds like fun," I reply in my best psychotic menace tone.

The guard turns and glances into the cell. Then he passes his hand over a metal plate. Magical aura reader. Kind of like a fingerprint scanner for wizards.

The door clicks open and I reach out and grasp his upper arm at the same time firing a wandless Stunner through my hand. He drops into the cell unconscious. I quickly drag him further into the cell before looking around the cell.

"Hi Harry," a battered and bruised Luna Lovegood cheerfully says with a wave.

I pull off my mask in surprise. "Luna?! How long have they had you?"

"Three months. They wanted something from Daddy." Luna gave me a small shrug. "The nargels told them to keep me."

I reach down to take the guards wand. I snap it and cast a Portus Charm on the one-half. I hand it to Luna saying, "When the wards go down, use this immediately. It will take you straight to the Order's Headquarters."

Luna threw her arms around me. "Thank you, Harry." I could feel the small blonde starting to shake.

I gently pulled her away. "I'm going to go take care of the wards now."

Luna nodded and moved back to her corner. "Good luck. Watch out for Slimy Dillwillys."

"I will."

I transfigured the sentry into a doll complete with the mark. I turned the other half of the wand into another Portkey and placed it inside the doll's shirt. It will activate as soon as the wards drop.

I step out of the cell and gently close the door but don't let it latch just in case. I pull out my wand and cast a short duration illusion of the Death Eater still standing on sentry. It won't talk but would make small movements as a real guard would.

Making my way down the hall I pass the door to the potions lab. I skip it as the next room is the ward room. I open the door and step in to the room. A large marble slab inscribed with runes occupies the centre of the room. You can cast protection charms like the Fidelius and anti-travel spells without an anchoring ward stone, but then it's only temporary. To get them to last longer than a few hours, you need anchoring wards pulling power from the magical ley lines that circle the earth. Destroying the anchor wards causes a cascading failure. The magical backlash can be felt for a long distance away.

"What are you doing in here?" a snide voice asks from behind me.

I never put my mask back on. Crap. And I recognized the voice. Luna warned me.

I turn to face the Death Eater standing behind me with his wand pointed at me. "Snivelous."

"Potter" the greasy git himself sneered. "Which one will reward me the most for handing you over to them?"

"After killing Remus and Tonks, I think we both know whose side you are really on."

"I told Dumbledore the Dark Lord made me do it to prove my loyalty. The old fool merely talked about necessary sacrifices." I could feel my blood starting to boil. Snape gives me a gloating grin. "In truth it was my idea. The last of the great Marauders! Dead at my hand with his little freak bitch at his side.

"I am on the same side I've always been on, fool! My own! Now, drop your wand, you ignorant brat."

I slowly raise my arm with my wand in it pointed at the wall to my right. Ever so slowly, I release the wand and watch Snape's eyes automatically follow its descent. As the wand touched the ground, I reach out with my magic and pull Snape at me.

Snape screams as my magic pulls him forward and up to the ceiling. With a sudden jerking motion of my hand, I slam his flailing body into Riddle's ward stone. The impact cracks the stone and Snape's skull. A powerful magical pulse ripples past me as the protective charms fail.

I wordlessly summon my wand back to my hand. I don't have much time but I can't help myself.

I walk up to Snape as he lay on the cracked stone. A quick diagnostic charm tells me the impact gave him a concussion and snapped his spine. He will be gone soon.

"You didn't get all the Marauders, Snivelous. Go to Hell with Mr. Talon's regards." I use the Half-Blood Prince's own signature spell to end his miserable life.

I can hear boots charging down the stairs into the basement. With a smirk and another new doll, I Apparate out of the basement.

--HPM--

The Death Eaters arrive in the field near the Shrieking Shack between Hogwarts and Hogsmeade. My Apparition was rather hurried and left a trail that a competent Auror could follow.

Or even a competent Death Eater.

Riddle arrives with two dozen of his remaining Death Eaters. The Death Eaters pause as they notice the thirty Aurors and remaining Order members waiting for them. I could see the red hair of the Weasley clan clustered together off away from Dumbledore. He lets out a shriek of rage as he feels the anti-travelling wards going up.

"You think you've trapped me here!" he screams out. "Now you can't get away from ME!"

"Sorry, Tom. But I have this contract I have to get rid of." I comment from where I am leaning against the Shack.

"Potter. Why would you fight for these fools? They plan on trying to throw you back in Azkaban if you could ever defeat me."

I nod reasonably. "True. And Dumbledore set up the whole thing for me to go to jail in the first place. Frankly, I don't care if you kill every witch or wizard in England outside of my true friends."

I can see that causes a stir amongst the 'Light' side.

"The Light side threw me away without a second thought. Its great leader agreed to the need to kill off my parents, godfather, foster uncle, and Tonks. He twice threw me into an abusive situation to toughen up his weapon."

I notice the Death Eaters are subtly moving into a defensive fighting pattern. I have to give Riddle one thing, he trained them well. Too bad I knew all of their fighting styles.

"So why fight for them?" Riddle asks.

"They are paying me a boatload of money for each one of you I take out. You're worth 100k galleons by yourself." I pull my Snape doll out.

"Snivelous here is worth 10,000. I could get another 10 if I can ever remember where I left Malfoy." I pretend to think. "Actually, I think I'll give up the money and leave him where he is."

I shudder as I feel two different Legilimency probes hit my shields, Dumbledore and Riddle. I brace my shields under the onslaught.

"You made a mistake, Tom" I ground out.

"What's that, boy?"

Activate! I hiss.

The field erupts as the best of the WWW springs into action. Half the Death Eaters are left standing in a Portable Swamp while magical crazy stings wraps around the lot trying to entangle them. Riddle could get rid of the swamp as easily as Flitwick, but he is a bit busy right now. (Plus Flitwick had time to study it for a while before Umbridge fled the school.)

The assault on my shields ends as the Aurors launch the first volley of spells as the surprised Death Eaters. Riddle and Dumbledore drop their assault as the battle erupts around them. I drop to one knee as the pressure suddenly eases.

I once watched Dumbledore stun a room full of people and leave out the people on his side without even pointing his wand. Unlike Muggles where one man is generally as strong as the next within reasonable variations, wizards can vary wildly in strength. Dumbledore probably has as much strength as ten average Aurors with a superb level of control. Voldemort can probably match a dozen and while he doesn't have Dumbledore's control, he has a vast array of Dark Arts at his disposal. Then there is little old me. I might have lucky thirteen Aurors worth of power and Riddle's knowledge, but neither Dumbledore's control or Riddle's mastery of the Dark Arts. However, I have something neither of them has- an eighteen-year-old body and the reflexes of a natural Seeker.

I dive into a roll to my right as a number of spells smash into the side of the Shack. My roll brings the Shack between the Light forces and me. That protects me from any more spells coming from my allies / employers.

A wandless shield gives me a moment as I gather my magic. I point my wand at the ground and utter a single word. The spell I unleash causes my wand to heat up in my hand. The energy smashes into the ground halfway between Riddle and I.

It was like throwing a rock in a lake. Waist high ripples roll out and rip through the Death Eater ranks. Their screams as the earth tsunami tosses them into the air are met with silence from the Light side as the stupid sheep actually stop to watch in a shock of their own.

The earth wave doesn't catch Riddle. He casts a pair of Stone Cutter Charms, cutting a path through the wave. He actual nods at me with a hint of real respect.

Now the battle truly joins.

I saw Peter be decapitated by a trio of Reductos fired by Ron and the twins. The three Weasley men were working as a unit and covering each other's backs. I could see them making their way over to where I was fighting alone.

"Oh, is ickle baby Potter still crying for his dog-father?"

Bellatrix.

She dodged the spell cast by my wand, but my wandless Blood Boiling Curse clipped her on the side.

The insane witch dropped to the ground as she grabbed her side in agony. "What did you do to me?"

I ignored her and fired an Incendio at her wand that she had braced in her hand pressed against the ground. I may have overpowered it as her whole hand burst into flame. She screamed again as her hand dissolved in a ball of flame.

"Die in agony, bitch," I muttered as I turned to my next opponent. Even as I turned away, her eyes were turning blood red and stream was coming out of all of her orifices.

Over half the Death Eaters were now down and a third of the Light forces. Dumbledore was holding back and directing his side whilst Tom was responsible for the death of most of the Light's forces by himself. An interesting commentary on their two styles.

"Tommy!" I call out. "Let's finish this!"

Riddle casts the same golden shield he used at the Ministry between himself and the Light forces.

"Potter, so finally we get to fulfil the prophecy."

"I don't care a rat's ass about any stupid prophecy given by a hack trying to scam a job, you stupid git. I'm going to kill you for the simple reason that you killed my parents." I pause a moment and add, "But the money sure helps!"

From the look on his face, no one ever talked to him like that in years. Probably not since his early years at Hogwarts.

"Potter, I'm going to..."

Stupid ass, talking when he should be fighting.

I cut loose with a chain of spells that the mildest would be called grey. I almost catch Tom but he gets a shield up that absorbs most of the energy. I still manage to knock him back a bit.

We start to volley spell energy back and forth. The ground around each of us is tor, cratered and blackened in minutes. Deflected spells off his shields managed to kill three more of his followers. The Shrieking Shack is burning next to me from a Killing Curse I'd dodged.

I finally get an opening when a harmless little charm following an overpowered Bludgeoning Curse cracked his shield. The Tongue

Tying Curse is almost clear and lost in the flashes of the other spells being thrown around it. The Power that Tom Riddle knew not: pranking.

Riddle tried to fire another Killing Curse but tripped over his own tongue. The use of a silly First year prank spell in the middle of a life and death battle shocked Riddle for a moment.

That was all I need.

I pull all of my magic and release it in one last spell. "Tarantus!"

The ancient Celtic spell called on their God of Lightning., the Celtic Thor. It pulled a bolt of lightning down from the sky. The bolt hit with the concussive force of a Bludgeoning Hex and all the electrical power of a natural bolt of lightning.

The last thing I see is Riddle's smoking corpse balled up on the ground. I feel my eyes starting to roll up as my magical exhaustion catches up to me.

Part X – Aftermath

"A pat on the back is only a few centimetres from a kick in the butt." – The Rules of Work (Anonymous)

19 August 1999

I wake up on a camp bed in a Wizarding tent. I recognize Madam Pomfrey moving around with a number of other Healers. I watch quietly trying to get my bearings.

Madam Pomfrey notices I am awake in less than a minute.

"Good morning, Mr. Potter. I see you still have your ability to end up in my care."

I grin up at her. "There is no where I'd rather be."

I see my favourite Healer suppress a smile as she fusses checking my diagnostics. “Your core is coming back nicely.”

Further conversation was ended by the arrival of Dumbledore with his minions, Percy, Hermione, and Moody. Scrimgeour and some other Ministry officials followed along with them.

“Hello, Harry. Well done. Yes, very well done.” The twinkling eyes and friendly smile was the same image the old git projected First year.

“Well, you got what you wanted, old man. Now as soon as Madam Pomfrey lets me go, I’m out of here.”

Dumbles gets his patented ‘Reluctant sorrowful’. “I am sorry, Harry, but I am afraid that can’t happen.”

I throw my sheets aside and stand up. I hate how weak I feel. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“The Wizengamot has decided that you are simply too powerful to be allowed to roam free. Our contract states that we cannot hinder you from leaving the country. And we will not do that. Our allies in the ICW have offered to hold you in their maximum-security prison in Siberia. You will be out of the country without any hindrance and Wizarding society will be once again safe from any potential Dark Lords.”

“You bastard.”

Dumbles leans forward as if he is sharing a secret. “Now, Harry. Do you really think you can fight me in your weakened condition without your wand? No one takes advantage of me. No one.”

Two cloaked Unspeakables step forward to stand on either side of me. I can’t do anything as they place magical restraints on my wrists. I glance at Hermione but she just gives me a disapproving McGonagall glare. No help there. Probably still ticked over the injection joke. No sense of humour that one.

Scrimgeour finally speaks. "These two representatives from the Department of Mysteries will take you to the place you truly deserve." He looks up at the two silent wizards. "Get him out of here."

They drag me out of the tent over Madam Pomfrey's shouted objections. Even Dumbledore's threat of suspension fails to stop her protests. Got to love that woman.

I see the Weasley men being held back by the Aurors. Nice to see that all made it through the battle alive even if George's ear is a bloody mess. I give them a little wink and a nod as I feel one of the Unspeakables activate a Portkey.

--HPM--

I stumble as we arrive a quick glance around tells me I've been here before.

This morning in fact.

"You didn't really think I'd let a wonderful lover like you rot in a jail somewhere, did you?"

I look over my shoulder as one of the Unspeakables drops his hood to reveal Daphne Greengrass. The other one pops away without another word.

"What is going on here?"

"Short story, Scrimgeour is afraid Dumbledore is going to try to force his view on the rest of the Wizarding World. He wants to put you on retainer in case his fears come true. For him to do that you have to be free. As far as Dumbledore will know, you will be safely in the ICW prison. After you are recovered, he will pay you the same money you got for Voldemort to get rid of Dumbledore in necessary. Interested?"

I rub my wrists to regain the circulation. "I think I need to be more completely briefed. Tell me, what do you think of sailing the Caribbean? In a string bikini?"

The smile tells me everything I need to know.

Epilogue

The sun was beating down as the Daphne cut easily through the waves in the waters south of the Turks. Jimmy Buffett is singing a rather silly song about Fins over the speakers.

A pair of arms wrapped around my shoulders as Daphne slid up behind me. I felt some interesting items pressing into my back as she held me. Not that I'm complaining. The last six months have been great. Lots of cardio exercising.

"I was wondering?" Daphne started. "What did you ever do with Malfoy?"

I start to snicker.

--HPM--

The prison guard ushered the newest prisoner of San Quentin State Prison down the cellblock to his new home. The guard almost felt sorry for the man. With his conviction, blonde hair and fine bone structure, the general population was going to eat him for breakfast.

The new inmate would be a gangbanger's new girlfriend by the time the guard got back to his regular post.

The guard watched the prisoner walk into his new home and wait as a fellow guard removed his shackles. At signal to a watching guard, the cell door slid closed.

The guard glanced at his partner and saw the man had similar thoughts that he did. However, neither guard had much sympathy for a convicted child rapist and murderer with life sentences either.

As the guard reached the end of the cellblock, he heard the new prisoner make his first noise since getting off the transfer bus. It was so full of hatred even the hardened guard shivered.

“POTTER!!”